

RPG
FREE RPG DAY

Bertram's Cove Quickstart

ROOT

❧ The Roleplaying Game ❧





About This Booklet

Happy Free RPG Day! This booklet is a preview of **Root: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME**, including six playbooks; all the basic moves; rules for depletion, wear, exhaustion, and injury; equipment mechanics; and a whole premade clearing to get you playing right away. Here, you'll find everything you need to get started playing and run through a dangerous, complicated situation in Bertram's Cove—one that could easily take a couple of sessions of play to sort out.

These rules might make more sense to those familiar with the Powered by the Apocalypse framework and games like **Dungeon World**, **Masks**, or **The Sprawl**, but they are designed to be usable by anyone. If you have any questions, or want to give feedback, you can head on over to our Magpie Games Discord (<https://magpiegames.com/magpie-games-official-discord/>).

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Root: An Overview

ROOT: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME is based on Leder Games's award-winning **ROOT: A GAME OF WOODLAND MIGHT AND RIGHT** board game about conflict and power, featuring struggles between cats, birds, mice, and more.

In **ROOT: THE RPG**, you all play vagabonds, denizens of the Woodland who have been cast out of “civilized” society, whether by their own volition or by exile. You venture throughout the Woodland fulfilling jobs, having adventures, and tipping the scales in the conflict between the factions.

This game focuses on fun adventurous action and escapades, on the meaningful, lasting backdrop of the Woodland and its war. You'll get into big fights and stage cunning heists, and you'll earn reputation with different Woodland factions, perhaps even helping them to take control over clearings.

The Woodland

The Woodland is defined by the dense forests from which it takes its name. They obstruct travel and construction, and even after years of habitation, the Woodland denizens are largely confined to “clearings”, mostly-treeless areas amid a sea of timber. The denizens cut paths between the clearings, facilitating travel and trade, but those are far from real roads.

Striding out into the forests between paths and clearings is a foolish, dangerous endeavor. The forests play home to bandits and outlaws, to bears and deer, to harsh conditions and dangerous terrain.

There are many species of Woodland denizen, but the dominant species include foxes, mice, rabbits, and birds. Clearings are populated mostly by one of the ground-dwelling species, with the birds spread out in the canopies across the Woodland.

Until relatively recently, the Woodland was held in the talons of the Eyrie Dynasties. Then the Dynasties tore themselves apart in a civil war, ultimately destroying what control they had over the clearings of the Woodland. In the new vacuum of power, many clearings were left in disarray, while others began to govern themselves...

When the Marquise de Cat took notice, she led her soldiers in from a far-off empire, along with their knowledge of industry and engineering. She took control, by force, by enticement, by whatever means necessary. And soon most of the Woodland clearings were under her sway.

Now, the Eyrie Dynasties have finally managed to regroup and muster their forces. They are pushing to take their ancestral domain, while the Marquisate stands strong against them. And all the while, the other denizens of the Woodland are beginning to stir in new, defiant ways, forming a Woodland Alliance to try to rebel against the other powers and take back the Woodland...

The Vagabonds

There have always been vagabonds in the Woodland. Exiles, outcasts, strangers, oddities. Idealists, rebels, criminals, freethinkers. Those who don't fit into the clearings and the paths. Those who would prefer to live in the spaces between.

Most of the time, the life of a vagabond is focused on survival. They take what jobs they can when they visit clearings—often the least desirable or most difficult jobs around—to get enough food and supplies to survive. Some even resort to crime, although any who primarily subsist on stealing from other denizens are more bandits or robbers than vagabonds.

But along with those harsh realities, the vagabond gets something else: freedom. The social structures of clearings rarely have any hold on the vagabonds. The rulers and politicians may threaten the vagabonds into compliance using force of arms, but even then, vagabonds have been hardened and sharpened by their lives. They carry great skill in combat, and some are more than a match for even squads of soldiers or guards.

The Players

In the full game of **ROOT: THE RPG**, each player creates a character, their own vagabond, using a playbook. A playbook is a kind of vagabond archetype, a set of abilities, character traits, and story elements all designed to help you make the coolest character possible. In this booklet, there are six prefilled playbooks to get you playing quickly—just choose the one you like best and start the game!

The Gamemaster

One player in your game of **ROOT: THE RPG** (likely the first one to read this booklet) will take on the role of Gamemaster (GM), with the responsibility to represent the world of the Woodland. The GM will portray all of the other denizens who fill up the story. The GM isn't playing against the other players; their job is to portray the Woodland and make it an interesting, dramatic place of consequence and change.

The Factions

The Woodland plays home to many denizens and powerful groups, all vying for control of its resources. These powerful groups are called “factions”, and they extend over the width and breadth of the Woodland.

Bertram’s Cove, the premade clearing in this booklet, predominantly involves two factions—the Marquisate and the Woodland Alliance—with a third faction, the Eyrie Dynasties, being an outside threat. The Eyrie and the Marquisate are at war with each other for control over the Woodland, while the Woodland Alliance is a new and growing rebel force aiming to revolt against those greater powers.

There is one more “faction” of note within the Woodland—the Woodland denizens themselves. This faction is broken up and disunified—fox-dominant clearings don’t necessarily agree with mouse-dominant clearings. But the opinions of the regular denizens will affect the vagabonds wherever they go.

In all cases, no faction is “good” or “evil”. All factions do right and wrong. All factions help the denizens sometimes, and hurt others. All factions have members who have empathy and honor and care about those around them, and members who are in this fight purely for their own selfish benefit.



The Marquisate

Named for the Marquise de Cat who leads it, the Marquisate is either a faction of foreign invaders and colonizers, or a new force for order and industrialization—it depends upon whom you ask.

The Marquise de Cat comes from a foreign empire, and swept into the Woodland with her army when the Eyrie Dynasties were no longer in power. In general, the Marquise’s goal is still to industrialize the Woodland and fully tap its resources. Perhaps this is about improving her own position in her home empire; perhaps it really is about improving the lot of the denizens of the Woodland. Only time will tell.



The Eyrie Dynasties

The history of the Eyrie Dynasties stretches deep into the Woodland’s past. They claim that they have always ruled the Woodland, and always shall. True, their reign was characterized by infighting, by regime change (often at the edge of a blade), by bird dominance and oppression of the other Woodland denizens...but they also protected the clearings from bandits and the wild. They built and maintained the paths between clearings. They enforced law and order, and they made the Woodland what it is today.

Everything came crashing down in a recent civil war, one of the more vicious conflicts to ever face the Eyrie. The Dynasties nearly tore themselves to pieces back then. Now, a newly resurgent Eyrie is caught in a new war with the Marquisate to retake the Woodland clearings—their rightful domain. And with an enemy outside of itself for once, the Eyrie is ready to wage total war. After all, the denizens of the Woodland need its protection.



The Woodland Alliance

In the midst of the new war for the Woodland, many denizens have reached their boiling point. After years of chaos in which they found themselves free of any reigning wing, paw, or claw, to suddenly have two major empires trying to force a yoke upon them yet again—it’s unacceptable. These denizens built the Woodland Alliance, a network of would-be rebels, and waited for their moment to hit the Eyrie and the Marquisate hard enough to take back their Woodland.

The Woodland Alliance isn’t a straight representative of the denizens, of course—they weren’t elected or chosen by the denizens at large. They arose from the denizens most angry at the current war and the other powers, and they are willing to take extreme measures to defeat those empires. Sometimes, that means freeing clearings from oppressive regimes. Other times, that means creating martyrs and making terrible sacrifices.

Choosing Characters

The full game of **ROOT: THE RPG** will include all the rules you need to create your characters from scratch. For this booklet, though, the characters are mostly pregenerated so you can jump into play faster! Here's what you need to know:

Playbooks

Each pregenerated character is tied to a playbook, an archetype that comes with a set of abilities, skills, questions, and dramatic issues. For this booklet, there are six characters and playbooks available:

- **Dara the Adventurer:** Dara is a kind traveler and believer in peace. She's from Oar's Rest, across the Grand Lake, and she's excited to meet up with Saffron Goodacre.
- **Sherwin the Harrier:** Sherwin is a fidgety squirrel, determined to win, always. He's coming home to Bertram's Cove and the brother he hates, Bill "Hookpaw" Hayward.
- **Clip the Ronin:** Clip is a trained spy, assassin, and soldier from a far-off land. He owes a debt to the Marquisate's Maître Espion Dubois, now stationed in Bertram's Cove.
- **Umberto the Raider:** Umberto is a mouse who loves to fight, through and through. He's coming to Bertam's Cove hoping to fight the famed Captain Sparrowhawk.
- **Rattler the Pirate:** Rattler left Bertram's Cove after her father died and his ship was confiscated. She returns with her own ship, the *Twice Sunk*, hoping to take vengeance.
- **Lucasta the Raconteur:** Lucasta returns to her home in Bertram's Cove under a different name, hoping to show off and further build her reputation as a legendary storyteller.

You're going to be adding more details about the Woodland and the different denizens as you flesh out your characters during play. That's well and good. Use everything in the pregenerated characters as a starting point, but feel free to play in the undefined spaces and the edges.

Name, Species, and Look

Every vagabond has a name—and often, an epithet, a working name for them to conduct crimes under. If you want an epithet for your vagabond, fill one in!

Then, every denizen has a species—what kind of denizen you are. Are you a fox? A rabbit? A bird?

Species has no mechanical effect—anyone can be a vagabond. But socially, your species will influence how some denizens deal with you. If you're a bird, you may be hated still further by other birds who see you as an outcast...or you might be embraced by the birds of the Eyrie, who try to woo you to their side. If you're a wolf, then you may be looked at with suspicion—most denizens probably haven't seen a wolf before.

Finally, the vagabond's details. Each pregenerated character has a short description at the top right of the playbook and in the character background—feel free to elaborate!

Stats

Each vagabond has five stats: Charm, Cunning, Finesse, Luck, and Might. Throughout the game, you'll be rolling two six-sided dice and adding these stats to determine the results of moves. So, the higher the stat, the more likely things will go in your favor for the associated moves.

Charm measures how socially adept you are, how capable you are of bending other people to your will using words and ideas.

Cunning measures how sharp-minded you are, how capable you are of noticing important details in people and places, and how capable you are of tricking others.

Finesse measures how deft and dexterous you are, how capable you are of performing complicated or intricate tasks with your hands.

Luck measures how...well...lucky you are, how capable you are of putting your fate into the hands of pure chance and coming out on top.

Might measures how strong and tough you are, how capable you are of overpowering opponents or succeeding in tasks that require brute force.

Each playbook comes with a predetermined set of stats. Normally, you get to add +1 to the stat of your choice, so long as you don't raise any stat beyond +2. **This +1 has already been added in for all the pregenerated characters.**

Over the course of the game, you might unlock advancements that will further improve your stats, but the absolute maximum you may have in one stat is +2 without a special move, and +3 with a special move (like the Arbiter's **Brute**).

Background, Drives & Nature

Next up, you have your background, drives, and nature.

The background for every pregenerated character has already been filled in, but feel free to elaborate on what is provided or make small alterations that fit your style of play.

The characters' drives have also been chosen. These two drives describe how you can advance—fulfill the condition of the drive and you can advance immediately. But you can only advance once per session per drive! If you want to see what you can do when you advance, check out page 14 for some basics and page 31 for specific options.

Finally, the characters' natures have already been chosen. Your nature refers to your deeper personality type. It's a way that you act to relieve stress. If you fulfill the condition of your nature, you can clear your entire exhaustion track (see more about that on page 12). You can fulfill the condition of your nature any number of times, as long as you take the necessary action.

If you feel strongly about changing any of these options, you can talk about doing it with your GM—but what's already in there is prechosen to fit Bertram's Cove and its problems.

Moves, Weapon Skills, and Roguish Feats

Each playbook has moves of its own. Many moves require you to roll with a particular stat—pay close attention to those stats, and how they connect with your stat line. The playbook moves for the pregenerated characters are already chosen.

Weapon skills each refer to one of the special weapon moves. To use them, you need a weapon tagged with that move, and you need the appropriate weapon skill. For example, to use Cleave, you have to both have the weapon skill and have a weapon tagged with that skill. The pregenerated characters' weapon skills have already been chosen.

Roguish feats are the special feats of roguery and clandestine action that you're skilled in. These are used in conjunction with the **attempt a roguish feat** move. Each playbook has a few preselected, or can choose some number from the list. For this booklet, the pregenerated characters all have their roguish feats selected.

Introductions & Connections

When everyone is done picking and reading over their characters, go around and introduce your characters. Explain who you are, why you're a vagabond, what you do, and what your drives are. Answer any questions the GM or other players ask. After everyone has introduced their characters and you know who the other vagabonds in your band are, you'll choose connections to those other vagabonds. Go around in the same order, each player adding one connection at a time. Each player has two connections on their character sheet and gets to use both, so go around until each player has set up the two connections from their own character sheet.

Each connection also comes with a small rules tweak. Make sure you read it out loud so everyone involved with the connection is aware of it.

Other Elements

You also have harm tracks (injury, exhaustion, and depletion) and equipment. Your harm tracks represent your health, stress, and general equipment, while your equipment is the more specialized and important items you are carrying. For more on your harm tracks, see page 12. For more on equipment, see page 13.



Playing Root: The RPG

Talking and Moves

ROOT: THE RPG is a tabletop roleplaying game, and that means it plays out like a conversation. The rules are here to help that conversation, prompting interesting statements and helping to fill in gaps or moments of uncertainty.

In this game, the most common way the rules prompt conversation is with “moves”. A move is a single nugget of rules, phrased as a “When X happens, Y happens” kind of sentence. “When you engage an enemy sword-to-sword, roll with Might.” “When you attempt a roguish feat, roll with Finesse.” “When you trick an NPC, roll with Cunning.”

The first part of the move, the “When X happens” part, is called the trigger. When the trigger occurs in the conversation of the game, then the move is triggered, and the second part follows. Sometimes, that second part says something happens. Sometimes, it calls for a dice roll (always 2d6, usually with a stat added).

The core takeaway to keep in mind right now is this—if a move is triggered, you follow the instructions. If a move hasn’t been triggered, you keep the conversation moving.

Rolling the Dice

If a move asks you to roll dice, roll two six-sided dice (2d6) and follow the outcomes listed in the move. Usually, moves ask you to roll with something—like “roll with Might” or “roll with Reputation”—which means that you add that stat to the roll.

The outcomes of a move fall into three categories:

- **10+:** a full hit! You get your way.
- **7-9:** a partial hit with costs, complications, or consequences.
- **6-:** a miss. The GM tells you what happens. It probably won’t be good.

Some moves tell you what happens for each category, while others allow you to choose more options when you roll higher. Either way, rolling higher is usually better.

The GM never rolls dice. Instead, they tell you what’s happening and respond to the actions your characters take. They also act as the referee if there’s any disagreement about what a move means.

The Basic Moves

Every vagabond makes use of the basic moves, included on the following page. Here’s a list of the basic moves, along with a primary stat if applicable:

- Persuade an NPC (Charm)
- Figure Someone Out (Charm)
- Trick an NPC (Cunning)
- Read a Tense Situation (Cunning)
- Attempt a Roguish Feat (Finesse)
- Trust Fate (Luck)
- Wreck Something (Might)
- Help or Interfere
- Plead with a PC

These moves help structure the core conversation of the game. A wide variety of the things the vagabonds do will fall under one of those categories, and their specific components ensure the conversation moves forward in interesting directions.

Vagabonds also have access to all the normal and some of the special weapon moves (see page 9), all reputation moves (page 11), and their own playbook moves. All of those are more specific moves designed to help fill in particular parts of the overall conversation. The weapon moves, for example, cover fighting and using weapons, while the reputation moves cover using your reputation throughout the Woodland.

Attempt a Roguish Feat

*When you **attempt a roguish feat** you are skilled in, say your goal and roll with Finesse. On a hit, you achieve your goal. On a 7-9, mark exhaustion or one risk of your feat (GM’s choice) comes to bear. When you **attempt a roguish feat** you are NOT skilled in, you are **trusting fate**.*

Every character has a few roguish feats trained. You can try to do any of them, but if you’re not trained in a feat—you don’t have the box checked—then you’re not “attempting a roguish feat” when you try it, you’re “trusting fate”.

You have to state your goal when you attempt a roguish feat—something like “steal the jewel from that guy’s pocket,” or “sneak into the barracks unseen,” or “disable the traps.” “Achieving your goal” means that even if there was a cost or complication, you did the thing—you stole the jewel, you snuck into the barracks, you disabled the traps.

Here’s a list of all the roguish feats and likely risks:

Roguish Feats

Feat Name	Description	Risks
Acrobatics	Adeptly climbing, vaulting, jumping.	Break something, detection, plunge into danger
Blindside	Backstab, murder, sneak attack, suckerpunch	Draw unwanted attention, leave evidence, plunge into danger
Counterfeit	Copying, forgery, fakery	Leave evidence, take too long, weak result
Disable Device	Disarming traps, turning off mechanisms	Break something, draw unwanted attention, expend resources
Hide	Disappear from view, remain hidden	Expend resources, leave evidence, take too long
Pick Lock	Open a locked door, chest, etc	Break something, detection, plunge into danger
Pick Pocket	Subtly steal from a pocket	Leave evidence, take too long, weak result
Sleight of Hand	Palming, switching, ditching, flourishes	Draw unwanted attention, leave evidence, weak result
Sneak	Get into or out of places without being seen	Break something, draw unwanted attention, plunge into danger

Risks Definitions

BREAK SOMETHING

Break something you're carrying or in the environment. Possibly mark wear.

DETECTION

Straight up get noticed by an onlooker.

DRAW UNWANTED ATTENTION

Either create hostile onlookers where before no one cared, or call attention without actually being detected.

EXPEND RESOURCES

Use up supplies. Mark depletion or exhaustion as the GM chooses.

LEAVE EVIDENCE

Leave behind evidence that can later lead an investigation against you or expose your allies to retribution.

PLUNGE INTO DANGER

Seize the chance to act and run into a more dangerous situation.

TAKE TOO LONG

Take too much time, leading the situation to change around you in some meaningful way.

WEAK RESULT

Get a hard choice about exactly what you want, or just straight up don't quite get everything you want.

Figure Someone Out

When you **try to figure someone out**, roll with *Charm*. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 1. While interacting with them, spend your hold 1-for-1 to ask their player a question:

- is your character telling the truth?
- what is your character really feeling?
- what does your character intend to do?
- what does your character wish I'd do?
- how could I get your character to _____?

This move doesn't resolve immediately—you get a few points of “hold” which you spend according to the move. Here, you spend hold during the conversation to ask questions.

When you ask questions, “their player” answers (and answers honestly), meaning that another player answers for another vagabond, and the GM answers for NPCs. For the question, “how could I get your character to _____?”, you can fill in the blank with anything—and “You can't” is a valid answer, if it's true.

Persuade an NPC

When you **persuade an NPC with promises or threats**, roll with *Charm*. On a 10+, they see things your way, provided you have given them a strong motive or reasonable bribe. On a 7-9, they aren't sure; the GM will tell you what you need to do to sway them.

This move is used when you're trying to get someone to do what you want based on what you're saying. If you're making threats, if you're making a persuasive argument—that's persuading an NPC. It's always an NPC—this move is no use against the other vagabonds.

“A strong motive or reasonable bribe” is dependent upon the character, the situation, and the GM's judgment. That means on a 7-9, the requirement is higher—the GM will tell you what more you have to do.

Read a Tense Situation

When you **read a tense situation**, roll with *Cunning*. On a 7–9, ask 1. On a 10+, ask 3. Take +1 when acting on the answers.

- what's my best way out / in / through?
- who or what is the biggest threat?
- who or what is most vulnerable to me?
- what should I be on the lookout for?
- who is in control here?

This move is about taking in the area around you and figuring out what matters. You can only read a tense situation. So if you have ample time and no pressure to search a room, you're not triggering the move—you just search the room.

Whether or not you are “acting on the answers” is ultimately up to the GM to decide, but usually it should be interpreted pretty liberally. As long as your actions are informed or supported by the information you gained, you should probably get the bonus. It lasts until the situation changes enough for the information to no longer matter.

Trick an NPC

When you **trick an NPC** to get what you want, roll with *Cunning*. On a hit, they take the bait and do what you want. On a 7–9, they can instead choose one:

- they hesitate; you shake their confidence or weaken their morale
- they stumble; you gain a critical opportunity
- they overreact; take +1 forward against them

Unlike persuasion, tricks rely on deceit and manipulation—tricking someone isn't about convincing them through argument or pressure; it's about saying or doing whatever is necessary to get them to act how you want. Just like persuading an NPC, you can't trick another vagabond.

On a hit—a 7 or up—the NPC is deceived in some way...but on a 7–9, they don't have to do what you expect. Instead, they can hesitate, stumble, or overreact at the GM's discretion.

Morale harm is a special kind of harm for NPCs only. You'll find more on it later, but suffice to say it brings them closer to submitting to or fleeing from you. If an NPC hesitates, the GM should consider inflicting morale harm on them.

Trust Fate

When you **trust fate** to get through trouble, roll with *Luck*. On a hit you scrape by or barrel through; the GM will tell you what it costs you. On a 10+, fortune favors the bold; your panache also earns you a *fleeting opportunity*.

This move is here to act as a back-up, all-purpose move. Always use a more specific move if there is one, but when a vagabond does something dangerous, risky, difficult, or otherwise tense, and no other move covers the situation... they're probably trusting fate.

Remember that on any hit at all—any result of 7 or higher—there is still a cost. Trusting fate is risky, and nearly always costs something, whether a dropped item or exhaustion.

“Scraping by” or “barreling through” both imply that you aren't doing this gracefully or skillfully—you're just barely making it, or you're smashing straight ahead.

A “fleeting opportunity” is a short-lived chance for the vagabond to really stretch, to try something especially dangerous for potentially great reward.

Wreck Something

When you **wreck something**, roll with *Might*. On a hit, you seriously break it; it can't be used again until it's repaired. On a 7–9, you're imprecise and dangerous; you cause collateral damage, attract attention, or end up in a bad spot, GM's choice.

Wreck something is for bashing doors down, breaking equipment, and more. You need to actually be able to wreck something for the move to trigger—a single mousefolk vagabond with a dagger can't wreck a windmill. But a mousefolk vagabond with a battering ram could.

By default, wrecking something is based on brute force. Careful “wrecking” based on device knowledge and cutting the right cord, for example, is a roguish feat or *trusting fate* (unless you have a special move for it).

Help or Interfere

When you **help or interfere** with another vagabond, mark exhaustion to add +1 or -2 to their roll (after rolling). Mark exhaustion again to select one of the following:

- conceal your help or interference
- create an opportunity or obstacle

To help or interfere, a vagabond must be able to take appropriate action for the specific situation. Multiple vagabonds can help or interfere with the same roll, as long as each marks exhaustion.

If a vagabond creates an opportunity or obstacle with their help or interference, they might make something longer-lasting based on their action. It's only an opportunity, however, not a guarantee.

Plead with a PC

When you **plead with a PC** to go along with you, they clear 1 exhaustion if they agree to what you've proposed. You may use this move only once per session.

Pleading with a PC is the best way to get other vagabonds to go along with your plans. Each PC can only plead with another PC once per session, whether or not they agree! And if the other PC doesn't agree, they're signalling that there is no way they'd do this—time to find another way forward.



Weapon Moves

All vagabonds can use Engage, Grapple, or Target, if they have a weapon with the right range. To use a special weapon move, you must have both a weapon with the appropriate tag and the weapon skill. (Improvise Weapon and Confuse Senses just require usable materials.) By default, unarmed vagabonds do 1-exhaustion harm. Armed vagabonds do 1-injury harm.

Engage in Melee

When you **engage an enemy in melee at close or intimate range**, roll with Might. On a hit, trade harm. On a 10+, pick 3. On a 7–9, pick 1.

- inflict serious (+1) harm
- suffer little (-1) harm
- shift your range one step
- impress, dismay, or frighten your foe

Grapple an Enemy

When you **grapple with an enemy at intimate range**, roll with Might. On a hit, you choose simultaneously. Continue making choices until someone disengages, falls unconscious, or dies. On a 10+, you make one choice first, before beginning to make simultaneous choices.

- you strike a fast blow; inflict injury
- you wear them down; they mark exhaustion
- you exploit weakness; mark exhaustion to inflict 2-injury
- you withdraw; disengage to close range

Target Someone

When you **target a vulnerable foe at far range**, roll with Finesse. On a hit, you inflict injury. On a 10+, you can strike again before they get to cover—inflict injury again—or keep your position hidden, your choice.

Cleave SPECIAL

When you **cleave armored foes at close range**, mark exhaustion and roll with Might. On a hit, you smash through their defenses and equipment; inflict 3-wear. On a 7–9, you overextend your weapon or yourself: mark wear or end up in a bad spot, your choice.

Confuse Senses SPECIAL

When you **throw something to confuse an opponent's senses at close or intimate range**, roll with Finesse. On a hit, you've thrown them off balance, blinded them, deafened them, or confused them, and given yourself an opportunity. On a 10+, they have to take some time to get their bearings and restore their senses before they can act clearly again. On a 7–9, you have just a few moments.

Disarm SPECIAL

When you **target an opponent's weapon with your strikes at close range**, roll with Finesse. On a hit, they have to mark 2-exhaustion or lose their weapon—it's well out of reach. On a 10+, they have to mark 3-exhaustion instead of 2.

Harry a Group SPECIAL

When you **harry a group of enemies at far range**, mark wear and roll with Cunning. On a 10+, both. On a 7–9, choose 1.

- inflict 2-morale harm
- they are pinned or blocked

Improvise Weapon SPECIAL

When you **make a weapon out of improvised materials around you**, roll with Cunning. On a hit, you make a weapon; the GM will tell you its range tag and at least one other beneficial tag based on the materials you used. On a 7–9, the weapon also has a weakness tag.

Storm a Group SPECIAL

When you **storm a group of foes in melee**, mark exhaustion and roll with Might. On a hit, trade harm. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7–9, choose 1.

- you show them up; you inflict 2-morale harm
- you keep them off balance and confused; you inflict 2-exhaustion
- you avoid their blows to the best of your ability; you suffer little (-1) harm.
- you use them against each other; mark exhaustion again and they inflict their harm against themselves

Parry SPECIAL

When you **try to parry the attacks of an enemy at close range**, mark exhaustion and roll with Finesse. On a hit, you consume their attention. On a 10+, all 3. On a 7–9, pick 1.

- you inflict morale or exhaustion (GM's choice)
- you disarm your opponent; their weapon is out of hand, but in reach
- you don't suffer any harm

Quick Shot SPECIAL

When you **fire a snap shot at an enemy at close range**, roll with Luck. On a hit, inflict injury. On a 7–9, choose 1. On a 10+, choose 2.

- you don't mark wear
- you don't mark exhaustion
- you move quickly and change your position (and, if you choose, range)
- you keep your target at bay—they don't move

Trick Shot SPECIAL

When you **fire a clever shot designed to take advantage of the environment at any range**, mark wear and roll with Finesse. On a 7–9, choose 2. On a 10+, choose 3.

- your shot lands in any target of your choice within range, even if it's behind cover or hidden (inflicting injury or wear if appropriate)
- your shot strikes a second available target of your choice
- your shot cuts something, breaks something, or knocks something over, your choice
- your shot distracts an opponent and provides an opportunity

Vicious Strike SPECIAL

When you **viciously strike an opponent where they are weak at intimate or close range**, mark exhaustion and roll with Might. On a hit, they suffer serious (+1) harm and cannot mark wear on their armor to block it. On a 10+, you get away with the strike. On a 7–9, they score a blow against you as well.



Reputation Moves

Each vagabond has a reputation across the Woodland. At the start of a campaign of **ROOT: THE RPG**, they'll have some reputation, but mostly be unknown. As they take more and more actions amid the war, however, their reputations, good or bad, will grow. The factions and general denizens of the Woodland will come to have stronger and stronger opinions about each individual vagabond. To represent this, **ROOT: THE RPG** uses this system of reputation tracks and moves.

A bit of terminology, first. Prestige refers to positive word about you. Notoriety refers to negative word about you. Your Reputation is the actual score you have with any given faction, representing their overarching opinion and knowledge of you.

Each PC tracks their own Reputation independently, and each PC tracks Reputation for each faction independently of the others. In situations where multiple PCs' Reputations are at stake, add them together (max +4, min -3).

The full game of **ROOT: THE RPG** contains more Reputation moves you can use with particularly high or low Reputations.

Mark Prestige

When you **mark prestige**, mark the next box to the positive (right) side of 0 on the appropriate faction's track.

When you **mark enough boxes to reach (not pass, reach) the next highest positive number on the track**, your Reputation with that faction increases! Clear all prestige boxes on the track, and circle the next highest number up from your current Reputation.

If you had -2 Reputation and marked five prestige, you would circle -1; if you had +0 Reputation and did the same, you would circle +1. Note that this means you need to mark five boxes to advance from -2 to -1, or from -1 to +0, or from +0 to +1 Reputation, but you need to mark ten boxes to advance from +1 to +2, and fifteen boxes to advance from +2 to +3.

Mark Notoriety

When you **mark notoriety**, mark the next box on the negative (left) side of 0 on the appropriate faction's track.

When you **mark enough boxes to reach (not pass, reach), the next lowest negative number on the track**, clear all notoriety boxes on the track and circle the next lowest number down from your current Reputation.

If you had +2 Reputation and marked three notoriety, you would circle +1; if you had +0 Reputation and did the same, you would circle -1. Note that this means you need to mark three boxes to drop from +3 to +2, from +2 to +1, from +1 to +0, or from +0 to -1, but you need to mark six boxes to drop from -1 to -2, and nine boxes to drop from -2 to -3.

Ask for a Favor

When you **ask for a reasonable favor based on your reputation**, roll with Reputation with the appropriate faction. On a hit, they'll grant you what you want. On a 7-9, it costs your rep a bit; clear one prestige or mark notoriety, your choice. On a miss, they refuse and view you with suspicion; mark notoriety.

Meet Someone Important

When you **meet with someone important for the first time**, roll with Reputation for their faction. On a hit, you're aware of their wider reputation (if any), and they're aware of yours (if any). On a 7-9, pick one. On a 10+, both.

- you've heard stories; ask a question about them, and the GM will tell you one story you've heard about them as an answer
 - they've heard something in your favor; take +1 forward when you first try to play up your connection with them and their faction
- On a miss, you only know the basics about them, and they've heard stories about you and the things you've done, true or false—prepare for major complications.



Harm Tracks

Every vagabond has three tracks, each with at least four boxes, to track their stress, damage, and resources. They also have tracks for the durability of their equipment, and NPCs have their own special harm track to represent morale.

For each track, if a character must mark a box and cannot, they are in some way unable to act or even taken out entirely. (For equipment, needing to mark wear on a piece of equipment and being unable to do so means the piece of equipment breaks.) A character can never choose to mark a box as an option on a move if they don't actually have an empty box to mark.

Exhaustion

Exhaustion tracks a character's energy, will, and effort. The more boxes checked, the more tired the character is. If a character has to mark a box of exhaustion and cannot, then they fall unconscious or are otherwise left completely at the mercy of those around them. Exhaustion clears approximately one box every night of decent rest, and all boxes if a PC gets some rest and care. Also, if a PC fulfills the condition of their nature, they immediately clear all boxes of exhaustion.

Injury

Injury tracks a character's physical health. The more boxes checked, the more wounded, injured, and bruised the character is. If a character has to mark a box of injury and cannot, then they are dying. They likely pass out or are otherwise utterly incapacitated, and will perish without medical aid. Injury clears when a character receives medical attention, or when they rest for an extended time.

Depletion

Depletion tracks a character's stash of resources and assorted minor equipment. The more depletion boxes checked, the fewer resources a character can call on quickly and easily—the

equivalent of saying your satchels and pouches are empty. If you have to mark a box of depletion and you can't, then it means you're out of supplies, but you suffer no other consequences. Depletion clears when you resupply—for instance, if someone pays you in resources, you spend some time foraging in the woods, or you steal assorted goods and food from someone's pantry.

Wear

Wear is a track for each individual significant piece of equipment a vagabond carries. As the equipment gets damaged, you will mark its wear boxes. If you have to mark wear and cannot, then the piece of equipment breaks. If the piece of equipment is only damaged, then it can be repaired, though that'll often require expert help from a smith or a Tinker. To see more about repairs, check page 13.

NPCs have a wear score that works as an overall track for their equipment and resources. If the track fills and they have to mark another box, then an important piece of equipment on them (their weapon, their armor, etc.) breaks.

Morale

Morale is only used by NPCs. Morale tracks a character's will to keep going in the face of danger and threat. The more boxes checked, the closer a character comes to breaking entirely and fleeing. If a character has to mark a box of morale and cannot, then that's it—they break. They either surrender, likely groveling and begging for mercy, or they bolt.



Equipment and Treasure

For this booklet, every pregenerated character starts with some assigned equipment. Each piece of equipment comes with a few traits, maybe a weapon skill tag, and its own wear track. If you ever fill a piece of equipment's wear track and need to mark another box, that equipment breaks entirely—you use it one last time, but you damage it beyond repair.

When a vagabond wants a piece of general equipment—a rope, a torch, a compass—they can mark a depletion to pull it from their pouches and bags. This includes money and medical supplies. It costs approximately 1-depletion (or 1-Value) to pay for clearing 1-injury by a skilled healer, or to get enough supplies for an appropriately trained vagabond to provide the same healing.

Important note for armor: When you're wearing armor, you can mark 1-wear on the armor instead of marking 1-injury on yourself. You can absorb multiple injury at once in this way. You can only do this if the armor you are wearing would actually protect you from the injury—for example, leather armor might not actually be of huge benefit when you fall off a castle wall. The GM is the final arbiter of whether your armor is applicable.

When a vagabond wants to repair their equipment, they need a capable crafter or smith, and to trade Value for repairs. Each box of wear repaired costs 1-Value, the equivalent of 1-depletion. If the piece of equipment is broken, though, then it'll have to be replaced entirely, not repaired.

When the vagabonds have access to ample supplies—say, when they get to pick through the barracks armory as payment for a job—they clear their depletion tracks as they resupply.

Treasure

Many vagabonds focus on filling their pouches with hard-won coin. Whether they take on jobs for wealthy Marquisate nobility or plunder ancient ruins, they're looking for treasure.

The Woodland has no single currency. As such, denizens of the Woodland are used to barter and trading goods.

In the game, this economy manifests in a few ways. First, any time you refer to something's worth, it's recorded in "Value": 1-Value, 2-Value, 3-Value, etc. Each box of depletion provides the equivalent of 1-Value. A vagabond's depletion track includes objects and items of some Value, such that a vagabond can use depletion to "pay" for new items and services by marking boxes.

Each piece of significant equipment has a Value determined by combining the following numbers:

- (Add) Boxes of wear
- (Add) Number of weapon skill tags
- (Add) Number of advantageous traits or extra ranges
- (Subtract) Number of disadvantageous traits

So, a well-made sword with three boxes of wear, one weapon skill tag, only its single default range, and one advantageous trait would be worth 5-Value.

Finally, treasures or sacks of coin or other items that only have Value, not utility, also exist on the same scale. There are relatively few such items in the Woodland—the denizens live mostly pragmatic lives. But sometimes a vagabond will find such a treasure in a ruin, or they will be paid by a Marquisate baron with a sack of coin.

A bag of coin or similar stack of cash is represented as a piece of equipment with boxes of wear equal to its Value. Vagabonds can spend those boxes one at a time to buy goods or services as they choose, including to replenish their depletion one box at a time when they buy goods from a store, or paying for repairs to equipment one box at a time.

A treasure that is a singular object should be represented as a piece of "equipment" with a number of boxes of wear equal to its Value. A beautiful golden scepter might be worth 7 boxes of wear, for example.

Unlike a bag of coins, you're not going to be able to just check off a few boxes of that scepter to buy something. A singular object cannot be broken up—it's an all or nothing exchange. You'll have to give over the object whole, so make sure you get something that's worth it!

Burden

Finally, vagabonds can't carry infinite amounts of stuff. Each significant piece of equipment a vagabond carries uses 1-Load. Some particularly large pieces of equipment might use 2-Load. A vagabond can carry equipment equal to 4 + Might without being burdened. Past that, they become **burdened**. Beyond the GM making appropriate moves and following the fiction, burdened vagabonds have to mark 1-exhaustion whenever they travel long distance. The absolute maximum they can physically carry is twice their burdened Load limit.

Buying and Selling

When a vagabond goes to buy or sell something, it's not always a simple, rote affair, a comparison of value. The denizen on the other end of the bargain matters! If they don't like vagabonds, or mistrust denizens of the vagabond's species, or see no use for gold... they'll bargain, dicker, or even refuse to deal.

The GM makes the call on how NPC denizens react and respond to deals, but should base it on the situation at hand. If the vagabond is trying to buy in a clearing they've saved, full of denizens with whom they have a high Reputation, then buying may be very simple! But in a hostile clearing, they may not be able to buy a darn thing.

Changing PCs

Over the course of play, the vagabonds will change and grow. They'll earn prestige with some factions and notoriety with others. They will become more skilled and more capable, even as the problems before them become more and more complicated.

To represent these changes, the vagabonds can advance through their drives, and they can update their natures, drives, and connections.

In the full game of **ROOT: THE RPG**, there are several ways to keep your characters growing and changing to support long-term campaign play. For this booklet, however, you'll find a simplified system of advancement.

Advancement

Vagabonds advance by following their drives. Each drive lists a condition by which the vagabond can advance. Ultimately, the GM is the judge of whether or not the vagabond has met their drive condition, but players should call the GM's attention when they think they have met a drive condition.

When you advance by following a drive, you'll pick another option from the advancement options available starting on page 31. These advancements are suggestions for the pre-generated characters and Bertram's Cove; they will speed up gameplay and choices substantially. If you want a fuller spectrum of possible choices, then you can choose from the list below, but we highly recommend using the options on page 31 to keep the game fast and smooth.

Here are the more open advancement options:

- Take +1 to a stat (max +2)
- Take a new move from your playbook (max 5 moves from your own playbook, including starting moves)
- Take a new move from another playbook (max 2 moves from another playbook)
- Take up to two new weapon skills (max 7 total)
- Take up to two new roguish feats (max 6 total)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You cannot take more than one advance per drive per session. So even if you think you've hit the same drive multiple times in a single session, you only get to advance once. You can advance once per session for each of your drives, however, meaning you can advance twice per session at most.

GM Reference

Agendas

- Make the Woodland seem large, alive, and real.
- Make the vagabonds' lives adventurous and important.
- Play to find out what happens.

Principles

- Describe the world like a living painting.
- Address yourself to the characters, not the players.
- Be a fan of the vagabonds.
- Make your move but misdirect.
- Sometimes, disclaim decision-making.
- Make the factions and their reach a constant presence.
- Give denizens drives and fears.
- Follow the ripples of every major action.
- Call upon their station and reputation.
- Bring danger to seemingly safe settings.

Moves

- Inflict injury, exhaustion, wear, depletion, or morale (as established).
- Reveal an unwelcome truth.
- Show signs of an approaching threat.
- Capture someone.
- Put someone in a spot.
- Disrupt someone's plans and schemes.
- Make them an offer to get their way.
- Show them what a faction thinks of them.
- Turn their move back on them.
- Activate a downside of their background, Reputation, or equipment.
- After every move, "what do you do?"

If you get stuck...

GIVE THEM A CARROT OR A STICK.

They're vagabonds — there's a good chance they'll seize on a dangled opportunity for profit, revenge, whatever fits their drives. But also, they're vagabonds — plenty of denizens mistrust them, and a knife at your throat is plenty good motivation to act.

SHOW A FACTION'S FANGS.

Every faction in the game can be threatening — even the denizens, if they want to. When the fangs come out, things start happening, so bare those fangs!

TARGET THEIR REPUTATIONS.

If they want to look like good guys, then threaten that with possible notoriety. If they don't mind being criminals, threaten that with someone who looks up to them.

NPCs and Harm

Creating NPCs

When you create a new NPC, give them a name, a description (including species), a job, and a drive.

When they get into a real fight or would mark harm, give them harm tracks and/or attacks.

Give them injury, exhaustion, wear, and morale harm tracks with at least 1 box and no more than 5 boxes in each track for a single character.

Choose their weapon, with a range (intimate, close, far) and an amount of harm that it deals (at least 1 injury or exhaustion, often more). A lethal weapon deals more injury, a tricky or tiring weapon deals more exhaustion, a bashing or breaking weapon deals more wear.

Groups of NPCs can be treated as mobs.

- **5-10 average denizens are a small mob:** 3 boxes of each harm type, deals x2 normal harm
- **10-20 average denizens are a medium mob:** 5 boxes of each harm type, deals x3 normal harm
- **20+ average denizens are a large mob:** 7 boxes of each harm type, deals x4 normal harm

Names

Aimee • Alvin • Alyse • Anders • Bhea • Billi • Braden • Buford
Cesspyr • Cinder • Cloak • Constance • Dawna • Dewly
Doneel • Dugan • Ellaine • Emmie • Ewan • Eward • Flannera
Fog • Foster • Frink • Gemma • Golden • Greta • Gustav
Harper • Henny • Hinnic • Howerd • Igrin • Ilso • Inda • Irwen
Jacly • Jasper • Jinx • Johann • Kagan • Keera • Keilee • Konnor
Laina • Lindyn • Lockler • Longtooth • Masgood • Mint
Monca • Murty • Nail • Nan • Nigel • Nomi • Olaga • Omin
Orry • Oxley • Pattee • Phona • Pintin • Prewitt • Quay
Quentin • Quill • Quinella • Reece • Rhodia • Roric • Rose
Sarrah • Selwin • Sorin • Stasee • Tammora • Thickfur • Timber
Tondric • Ulveny • Ulvid • Ummery • Urma • Vance • Vennic
Vittora • Vost • Wanda • Wettlecress • Whickam • Woodleaf
Xander • Xara • Xelie • Xim • Yasmin • Yates • Yolenda •
Yotterie Zachrie • Zain • Zoic • Zola

Species

badger • beaver • bluejay • cat • fox • hawk • lizard • mouse
opossum • otter • owl • rabbit • raccoon • squirrel • wolf

Drives

to get revenge • to get rich • to make family safe
to make home safe • to gain power • to explore
to build something magnificent • to resist invaders
to defend the weak • to destroy an enemy • to wage war
to prove worth • to undermine a figure of power
to find comfort • to serve a higher cause • to escape
to negotiate peaceful resolutions • to survive at all costs
to earn social status and position • to take control
to exert power and authority on others • to lay waste

NPC Harm Tracks

Here are some preplanned harm tracks you can use for your NPCs, depending upon who and what exactly they are.

1 INJURY, 1 EXHAUSTION, 1 WEAR, 1 MORALE

Pretty standard. Default to this for any given denizen.

Remember, multiple denizens in a group can add up their tracks, so add +2 to this track for a small group, +4 for a medium group, or +6 for a large group.

3 INJURY, 2 EXHAUSTION, 3 WEAR, 2 MORALE

A brute or a bruiser. A real threat to any individual vagabond, and even tough enough to threaten the band.

1 INJURY, 2 EXHAUSTION, 1 WEAR, 3 MORALE

A leader, not a fighter. Someone more likely to be in charge, and not to try to fight on their own.

2 INJURY, 2 EXHAUSTION, 3 WEAR, 3 MORALE

A lieutenant, committed to serving another's cause.

5 INJURY, 5 EXHAUSTION, 2 WEAR, 4 MORALE

A bear.

NPC Attacks

Here are a few possible weapons and attacks NPCs can use against the vagabonds:

- **Standard blade:** 1 injury.
- **Large blade or axe, wielded with strength:** 2 injury.
- **Tricky weapon, like a whip:** 1 injury, 1 exhaustion.
- **Heavy weapon, like a huge two-handed hammer:** 1 injury, 1 wear.
- **Wielded by a skilled and cunning fighter:** +1 exhaustion.
- **Wielded by a powerful and mighty fighter:** +1 injury.
- **Aiming to harm only equipment:** convert all harm to wear, +1 wear.

Inflicting Harm

As the GM, you inflict harm whenever it fits the fiction, as one of your moves. This means that if a vagabond goes through an exhausting experience, you should inflict exhaustion on them, usually 1 or 2. If a vagabond's equipment would be damaged by trying to scrape through a tight space in a castle wall, you might inflict 1 or 2 depletion on them. If a vagabond jumps from a tree, 40 feet from the ground, you might say that the BEST case scenario after *trusting fate*—the result of a 10+—is marking 1-injury, because it's just too high. Inflicting harm isn't a punishment, and it isn't a stick to discourage action—it's a way to stay true to the fiction, to make the Woodland seem real, to highlight the consequences of the vagabonds' actions in a way that honors their choices. If a vagabond can jump 40 feet without risking injury, then the Woodland loses its drama.

Bertram's Cove



How To Use This Clearing

A clearing write-up like this one presents one clearing of the Woodland, fleshed out with enough detail to make it easy to run at your table, but without giving you a clear, rigid adventure to follow. **ROOT: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME** has complicated, difficult, and explosive situations. As the vagabonds encounter those situations, they will change and intensify whether the vagabonds act or not. The key here isn't to expect any specific path—it's to know what the situation is, who the characters at play are, and how the situation is likely to develop both without the vagabonds' intervention and in response to any particular actions.

As the GM for this game, you should read the basic description, read through the conflicts, and skim over the NPCs and the locations. The idea isn't to memorize it all, but to have it stewing in your head. If certain elements are less interesting to you or the PCs, that's great! Don't worry about forcing them in just because they're written here. This isn't a straightjacket—it's a bunch of ideas meant to support and inspire you.

"At first sight" is a description of what the vagabonds would see when they arrive at the clearing. It's there just to set up an initial series of images and descriptions to build upon moving forward, a way to get things going.

The **core conflict** of a clearing is the big problem it's facing, the one that all the denizens know about, the one that's almost immediately apparent upon entering into the clearing. It's a kind of "current event." Any NPC a vagabond talks to in the clearing will have an opinion on the public conflict, and most everything that goes on in the clearing is in some way connected to the public conflict.

When the vagabonds come to the clearing, make the core conflict known very quickly—there should be no way they can miss it. Every single denizen has an opinion about the Marquisate's occupation; every single denizen has some thoughts on the Woodland Alliance and Captain Sparrowhawk.

The other **conflicts** of a clearing are smaller and more specific disputes within the clearing, most often tied to the overarching issue in their own way. Each is less obvious to the clearing as a whole than the overarching issue. Particular groups within the clearing will know about each conflict, and any denizen who knows about a conflict probably cares about it deeply. But other groups either don't know about the conflicts at all, or completely misunderstand them and underestimate their significance.

The vagabonds will have to do a bit of digging to get at the other conflicts—but once they're talking to someone who cares about that conflict, for example, then you can show them the fullness of the dispute or problem. The point isn't to hide the conflict from the vagabonds. It's to make clear that these issues are simmering below the surface, ready to boil up and cause major problems.

For both the core conflict and the other conflicts, the description of "How it develops" is there to let you know what would likely happen if the vagabonds never arrived in town. The vagabonds are the x-factor here, the unknown element in the mix that can tip the scales on any particular issue. Use the "How it develops" section to have ideas for events that happen off-screen and strategies employed by the clearing's major characters, but keep in mind—things will change as the vagabonds interact with those characters, stop their plans, save lives, and more. Give the vagabonds a chance to react to those events and plans by making sure their consequences appear before the vagabonds.

Description

The town of Bertram's Cove surrounds the area where the Alberdon River feeds into the eastern shore of the Grand Lake. The town has been a Marquisate supply line hub for many years and is a key piece of military infrastructure. The Woodland Alliance understands the area's value and is providing weaponry and logistical support to the local rebel forces.

Rebel pirates, bearing the colors of the Woodland Alliance, have been raiding Marquisate supply ships, mining random transport routes with explosives, and generally causing chaos on the water. Spurred forward by the mysterious rebel hero, Captain Sparrowhawk, the rate of these incursions has increased and the damage caused has taken a toll on the local naval fleet.

The journey across the lake by ship takes approximately one full day and night. The alternative overland path either takes a fortnight of dangerous wayfaring through bear-filled forests and jagged rocky terrain, or even longer by traveling along the paths circuitously. Bertram's Cove is an invaluable logistical resource for whoever occupies it.

As has been the case for generations, the denizens of Bertram's Cove cherish the lake as their home and birthright. Seeing the Marquisate slowly claim more and more ownership of their waters, the residents of Bertram's Cove have had enough. Some are willing to take action to return the area to their own stewardship. The Marquisate has kept the town stable and grown the quality of life for its inhabitants. Yet the stability comes at the cost of obedience and an understanding that the Cove is a part of the Marquisate's overall war effort. The Woodland Alliance offers freedom and the opportunity to choose a new path for the Cove. That said, however, the current local Alliance strategy requires sacrifices from the local denizens that few would pay if they had all of the details.

At First Sight:

Standing on the deck of the pirate ship Twice Sunk, the silhouette of Bertram's Cove appears in the distance, backlit by the rising sun. The smells of drying salted fish, morning fires, and freshly-pitched hulls mix as the ship approaches the river mooring.

As the full light of the day takes hold, the sheer overwhelming scale of Grand Lake becomes evident. Fishing vessels fill the cove's harbor with a bustle of activity. One large Marquisate brig, Le Grande Tigre, sits in a silent watch over the proceedings as it undergoes repairs. Glittering jewels of light dance across the water on the farthest reaches of the western horizon where one normally expects the hint of a distant shore.

Once the ship is tethered to the inspection dock, dockmaster Daisy Delaware walks boldly up the plank to collect both harbor taxes and juicy gossip in equal measure. Across the pier a military officer, Marquisate Commandant Astrid Montague, stands in gleaming armor dressing down a small group of troops. They are surrounded by a sea of brightly-colored wanted posters plastered to every piling. Each poster features a ridiculously grim face, with scars and fangs and red eyes, framed by bold lettering declaring, "Captain Sparrowhawk—Wanted dead or alive."

Conflicts

Core Conflict: Set to Blow

Marquisate Commandant Astrid Montague has set a standing bounty for the capture of any of the local Woodland Alliance rebel pirates that have harried her troops in recent months. She has reserved the largest reward for the face of the rebellion, Captain Sparrowhawk. Montague believes that Sparrowhawk's defeat or capture will break the spirit of those responsible for the insurrection.

Little does Montague know that prominent Cove denizen Saffron Goodacre is the true leader of the opposition. The Marquisate knows her only as the town treasurer and its primary historian. Goodacre will be satisfied with nothing less than the complete withdrawal and defeat of the Marquisate military. In meetings with Woodland Alliance sympathizers, she has been vocal in recent weeks about the need to "take it to the cats" and has planned a bomb attack on the local Marquisate-funded hospital—the same hospital where an entire company of sailors is being quarantined after some of their number fell ill from the Cuttlefish Cough.

The bomb is almost complete, but no one inside Goodacre's supporters wants to deliver the explosive device, even under the current plan of hiding it amid a shipment of crates containing blankets and bedding. Saffron's inner circle is concerned about the number of civilians who might be caught in the blast—the hospital treats all the denizens of Bertram's Cove, and patients, staff, and visitors might all be hurt. Goodacre plans to use the chaos of the blast and any ensuing rescue effort to launch a secondary attack on the responding soldiers, wiping out the majority of the Marquisate force stationed in Bertram's Cove. She needs a competent team to deliver the bomb, arm the device, and leave without arousing suspicions.



Unfortunately, the only volunteer is Aiden Birch, an impulsive adolescent mouse eager to prove his bravery. Aiden recently arrived in Bertram's Cove after hearing word that the local rebels had officially joined the Woodland Alliance. His eagerness is not tempered with wisdom and he is known to make reckless choices.

Astrid Montague has been given credible information of an imminent attack on the fort. The exact target is unknown to her but her advisors unanimously agree that the armory or docks are the most likely targets. That the local Alliance might bomb a hospital hasn't even been considered. Astrid is desperate for actionable information so the attack can be stopped and the rebellion quelled.

Between wasting time chasing down too many false leads, the damage to her fleet from Alliance attacks, and having so many troops in the hospital, Montague's resources are stretched thin and she needs help. While Saffron has a plan in place to do real harm, those rebels aware of the plan worry it comes at too high a price. They aren't sure what to do, some looking for an alternative that won't cost so many lives, others paralyzed by indecision.

How It Develops

If the vagabonds never arrived in Bertram's Cove, the attack on the hospital would move forward as planned despite having no one with the training necessary to arm the bomb. A glowing ember from a pipe held in Aiden's trembling hand would fall unnoticed beside the crates. The resulting wagon fire would cause a premature explosion, killing Aiden, injuring the couple of bystanders out on the street at night, and lighting a terrible fire in Bertram's Cove.

Reacting to the attack, Astrid Montague would place Bertram's Cove under martial law and ban all fishing on Grand Lake. Any civilian boats caught breaking the ban would be seized, the boat itself impounded and the crew imprisoned. The town's denizens would resort to scrounging in the forest or relying on Marquisate markets for supplies.



Conflict: Go Catch a Spy

Maître Espion Dubois, Astrid Montague's local spymaster, prides himself on having answers to questions most of the world doesn't think to ask. Now he is stuck with a mystery of his own that he needs solved. Deep cover operative Michel Lambert—who had been working as a deckmate on a fishing boat and slowly infiltrating the local Alliance organization for the Marquisate—has gone missing!

Michel missed his mandatory check-in two nights ago, he hasn't been back to his room, and no one has seen him. Dubois suspects that his agent has been captured by the rebels and wants Michel rescued if possible. He is willing to pay in coin, information, or favors to make that happen.

Saffron Goodacre was alerted of a spy in her midst after seeing her war journal out of place. Normally, she kept it in a drawer that was always closed, hidden beneath a false bottom, but when she arrived at her office one day, the journal had been moved to the top of her desk. She surmised that she had been compromised, but the perpetrator left in a hurry. Goodacre immediately ordered her second in command, Bill "Hookpaw" Hayward, to round up everyone that might have had access to the book. After sorting out those with alibis, he locked up the rest in a small warehouse at the rebel's secret stronghold hidden amid the trees. Michel is among those captives.

Hookpaw has been interrogating the prisoners one by one, including Michel, with little success. He knows that Saffron's patience is running thin and they need to make sure the base or her identity hasn't been compromised. He needs help proving who the spy is and getting them to talk.

Michel has hidden proof outside of the camp that Goodacre is the true leader of the local Alliance forces. What's more, Michel knows the location of the hidden base, guard shift schedules, and the layout of its fortifications. His return to the Marquisate would be invaluable—a fact that may lead Hookpaw to kill his most likely suspects to keep the Alliance's secrets.

How it Develops

If the vagabonds never arrived in Bertram's Cove, without a way to determine the spy's true identity, Hookpaw and Goodacre would kill three of the most likely suspects, including Michel. They would disappear the bodies and spread a rumor that the missing were traitors caught and executed by Captain Sparrowhawk himself. Word would spread of these "traitors" as a warning to future turncoats.

With its primary information source gone, the Marquisate would be unable to uncover the location of the secret base or the fact Saffron is its true leader. The town's denizens would be scared to even talk to the local military members lest they be accused of colluding with the Marquisate. This would allow Goodacre to continue to plan the rebellion from the shadows without interference from Dubois or his agents.

Conflict: Treasure in the Depths

A compact courier ship, the *Wavebreaker*, had been attacked in broad daylight while on a top-secret mission for the Marquisate. This crew managed to outrun the attacking pirates but the ship was heavily damaged by the pirates' grenades in the escape. While they still had a chance to act before the pirates found them again, the sailors scuttled the ship in deep water to avoid its capture.

The swim to safety proved too much for the exhausted crew and all perished. The discovery of debris and the sailors' remains on the surrounding beaches has given those searching for the missing ship a general search area, but no one knows the exact location of the wreck of the *Wavebreaker*.

Word has spread that the wreckage contains a military payroll chest filled with gold. The Marquisate doesn't want to lose such a large sum of money to their enemies and is offering a 20% bounty to anyone that returns the chest. The local members of Woodland Alliance have matched that offer. Both have made clear that anybody surfacing the gold and not returning it to them will suffer dire consequences.

The two forces are in constant hit-and-run skirmishes as they patrol the area, searching for any sign of the *Wavebreaker*. Both sides offer support and information for allies that join in the search on their side, attempting to frustrate and obstruct the other side's efforts while deploying as many treasure hunters as they can convince to risk their lives in the deeper waters of the lake.

One denizen, Daisy Delaware, has struck out on her own and is looking for a team to join her. She has traded information, gathered gossip, and used her knowledge of Grand Lake's water to pinpoint the most likely location of the wreckage. Now all Daisy needs is some strong arms and a boat to recover the treasure. She wants a 50/50 split of the profits with the vagabonds and in exchange, she shares everything she knows and gives them access to her experimental dive gear.

How it Develops

• If the vagabonds never arrived in Bertram's Cove, the Alliance would be the first to discover the ship's locations and recover the gold inside. Saffron Goodacre would use the funds to acquire better weapons, armor, tactical advisors, and logistical support for the local Alliance forces under her command.

• The rebel forces would finally have the resources to start engaging the Marquisate in more traditional direct warfare, eventually attacking the clearing outright in a frontal assault.

Conflict: Love and Rebellion

Posters throughout Bertram's Cove show the face of the dreaded Alliance rebel Captain Sparrowhawk. The eyes that stare out from the page are red, filled with malice. The knitted eyebrows, shadowed jawline, flat expression, and webwork of scars are all carefully drawn to inspire fear in the citizenry...to the point that the visage is practically comical in its dread style. The Marquisate needs Sparrowhawk to be a monster that loyalists won't hesitate to turn in. The artist has so pushed the illustration towards the sinister that it has become completely disconnected from its source. Kell Sweetgrass, a fisherman convinced by Saffron Goodacre to play the role of Sparrowhawk, is unrecognizable in the poster, his bland expressions and affable smile completely missing from Sparrowhawk's ridiculous, cartoonishly evil visage.

Kell was shocked at how fervently the local rebel soldiers rallied around the character. Even more horrifying was watching the Marquisate bounty for Sparrowhawk's capture or death continue to grow. The reward stands at a full resupply, a sum of gold (12-Value), and a token allowing one-time passage through any Marquisate-controlled area without question or delay.

Declan Sheehan, Kell's future husband, wants his betrothed to come safely home. They stay in touch with notes left in the knot of an old tree that they climbed as children. Declan urged Kell to run away with him but Kell's parents still live in Bertram's Cove and refuse to leave. Kell won't leave them behind, fearing they will pay the price for Sparrowhawk's reputation or suffer Saffron Goodacre's wrath at having been betrayed.

Kell is hiding at the Alliance base playing Sparrowhawk when needed. Scared and tired, he just wants to be free from Sparrowhawk and to return to his loved ones. Declan will give everything to make that happen. Goodacre doesn't want to take a chance at losing her figurehead and has filled Kell's head with certainty that both he and his loved ones will be killed by the Marquisate if he returns to town before the war is over.

Weighing heavily on Kell is the understanding that his work as Sparrowhawk was the catalyst for bringing the Woodland Alliance forces together in a spirit of unity and resolve. His speeches made a difference and he believes in the removal of the Marquisate and the Cove's future. He is unwilling to pay the price for that future with his life or that of his family though.

How it Develops

• If the vagabonds never arrived in Bertram's Cove, Kell would be captured—a fluke of chance resulting from a raid on a ship he visits in full Captain Sparrowhawk regalia. Astrid Montague would order Kell's execution by hanging.

• After the execution, Declan would hold a silent vigil in honor of Kell. The depth and honesty of Declan's grief eventually draws others to grieve with him. Local denizens would bring him water while the fort's soldiers would watch over him and share in his silence. Their collective understanding of all that had been lost would move denizens from both sides to demand their leaders talk and find a solution outside of war.

Important Residents

Astrid Montague

Commandant Astrid Montague is a cat who never intended to end up as a politician. Bertram's Cove was supposed to be a temporary posting while a less combat-oriented commander was transferred in. Shortly after she arrived, the Alliance attacks began and her superiors decided to keep her in place until she arrests the attackers. She likes the townsfolk well enough but she understands that a failure here will cost her any chance at moving further up the Marquisate ranks.

EXHAUSTION ☐☐☐☐ WEAR ☐☐☐☐

INJURY ☐☐☐☐ MORALE ☐☐

DRIVE: *To end the rebellion*

EQUIPMENT:

- High-quality armor set
- Greatsword
- Spyglass

MOVES:

- Call in reinforcements
- Make a strong tactical decision
- Strike with overwhelming violence

Saffron Goodacre

Saffron Goodacre moves through the streets of Bertram's Cove with the practiced grace of a diplomat. Her kind tones and thoughtful interactions mask her true nature as a calculating mouse tactician who understands the brutal realities of war. She is willing to sacrifice ethics in the name of victory. She leads from the shadows and values those allies who keep her secrets. When faced with a difficult choice, she errs towards victory over safety even if the price is steep.

EXHAUSTION ☐☐ WEAR ☐☐☐

INJURY ☐☐ MORALE ☐☐☐☐

DRIVE: *To drive the Marquisate from Bertram's Cove*

EQUIPMENT:

- Notebook
- Flowing robes
- Bottle of good wine

MOVES:

- Act with ruthless cunning
- Lie with practiced ease
- Manipulate others to insurrection

Aiden Birch

Aiden is an adolescent mouse who recently arrived from Oar's Rest, a sister city of Bertram's Cove that lies across the lake on the western shore. He left the village shortly after his older sister Rose returned home a Marquisate hero, replete with medals won on the front lines. Tired of living in her shadow, Aiden wants to prove himself the greater warrior and show everyone that she picked the wrong side in the war.

EXHAUSTION ☐

WEAR ☐

INJURY ☐

MORALE ☐☐

DRIVE: *To prove that he's brave*

EQUIPMENT:

- Dull sword
- A book of stories

MOVES:

- Act with reckless abandon
- Mask feelings with bravado
- Attack a problem with brute force

Kell Sweetgrass aka. Captain Sparrowhawk

Kell Sweetgrass is an unremarkable mouse who grew up working on his family's fishing boat. He is well known throughout the town for always having a smile on his face and a warm welcome for those he sees. That stark contrast between the mouse the denizens know and the terrible images of Sparrowhawk keeps the denizens of the Cove from making the connection between them. At first, portraying the fearsome captain seemed like a grand adventure. Now he cries himself to sleep at night longing for the smell of his mom's stew and the feel of his future husband Declan Sheehan's hand in his.

EXHAUSTION ☐☐

WEAR ☐

INJURY ☐☐

MORALE ☐☐

DRIVE: *To get safely home to Declan*

EQUIPMENT:

- Captain Sparrowhawk costume (including massive faux cutlass)
- A letter from Declan
- A small bit of cheese wrapped in cloth

MOVES:

- Embody Captain Sparrowhawk
- Make someone feel at home
- Blend in by being himself

Declan Sheehan

Declan is a burly mouse well known throughout the fishing community. He works hard, loves intensely, and gently supports those around him. He has moved in with Kell's parents to better care for them in his absence. Declan doesn't care about who wins in the current war. His priority is getting Kell safely home and leaving everything Sparrowhawk-related in their past. He is willing to give everything he has if it means Kell's return.

EXHAUSTION ☐☐☐☐ WEAR ☐
INJURY ☐☐ MORALE ☐☐

DRIVE: *To rescue Kell from his role of Sparrowhawk*

MOVES:

- Plead with sincerity
- Inspire with loving words
- Provide steadfast support

Daisy Delaware

Daisy Delaware draws information to her like blades of grass collecting the morning dew. She cherishes the change, growth, and money that knowledge brings. The constantly-busy mouse works as Bertram's Cove dockmaster, invents gadgets in her spare time, and has been known to sell a secret or two when the opportunity presents itself. Daisy strives towards greatness. What greatness means to her constantly shifts...but when focused on one task, she excels. Her work ethic has left her little time for socializing which suits her just fine.

EXHAUSTION ☐☐ WEAR ☐☐
INJURY ☐ MORALE ☐☐☐☐

DRIVE: *To seize every opportunity the war presents*

EQUIPMENT:

- Toolbag
- Marking chalk
- Small plain dagger

MOVES:

- Create a new gadget
- Deploy the right tool for the job
- Find anything in a mess

SPECIAL

Untested diving rig—Anyone using the rig takes +3 ongoing to **Deepwater Recovery** (page 23) and reduces the cost of a miss to 1-exhaustion.

Maître Espion Dubois

Maître Espion Dubois is a gregarious cat always quick to laugh and inspire the same in others. Officially, he is a Marquise hospitality and information logistics officer. Those in the fort's upper ranks know he is the fort spymaster, responsible for gathering covert information on enemy activities. Charming Espion often hosts lavish parties at the fort for both local and visiting dignitaries. During those parties, he works his magic and separates the guests from their secrets. Drink, good-natured banter, and the offer of a non-judgemental shoulder to cry on are the tools that he uses to encourage his guests to unburden themselves.

EXHAUSTION ☐☐ WEAR ☐☐☐☐
INJURY ☐☐ MORALE ☐☐☐☐

DRIVE: *To secure the return of Michel Lambert*

EQUIPMENT:

- Dozens of cipher key tattoos
- Soft-soled shoes
- Lock picks

MOVES:

- Learn a secret through casual conversation
- Disappear into the shadows
- Disarm with gentle joviality

Michel Lambert

Michel Lambert is a mouse who has spent his entire career with the Marquise military as a covert infiltration specialist. He moves into an area under a false identity, makes friends, and slowly becomes part of the community he has been sent to spy on. The urgency of the growing conflict in Bertram's Cove caused him to rush his normal methodical pace and mistakes were made. He is biding his time and looking for an opportunity to escape or a sign that Dubois has sent rescue. His current false identity is under the name "Tomasy Goodtail."

EXHAUSTION ☐☐☐ WEAR ☐
INJURY ☐☐ MORALE ☐☐☐☐

DRIVE: *To escape imprisonment and get the intelligence to Maître Espion Dubois*

EQUIPMENT:

- Cane with hidden sword
- Boot knife
- Bottle of disappearing ink

MOVES:

- Lie with practiced ease
- Withstand interrogation
- Hide objects in plain sight

NOTE: The listed equipment represents what Michel would normally be carrying, but he is currently imprisoned, and has none of it

Bill "Hookpaw" Hayward

Hookpaw Hayward is a thick-necked squirrel that earned his nickname through his preferred means of ending an argument. These days, no one that knows his history of paw-related-violence puts their paws anywhere within his reach. He is loyal to both the Woodland Alliance and Saffron Goodacre almost to the point of zealotry. Hookpaw is a blunt instrument that gets the job done but makes an awful mess along the way. He specializes in those times where subtlety is unnecessary.

EXHAUSTION □□□□ **WEAR** □
INJURY □□□□ **MORALE** □□

DRIVE: *To get the Marquisate spy to confess*

EQUIPMENT:

- Knuckledusters
- Sack of bread and cheese
- Enormous dolly tow hook

MOVES:

- Hook someone's paw
- Intimidate into submission
- Undertake extreme action out of loyalty

Marquisate Soldiers

Approximately 70 soldiers, including support staff, are stationed at the Bertram's Cove fort. Well-disciplined and professional, the soldiers and sailors here train in both land and water combat. If needed, you can create specific soldiers: use the GM's NPC creation rules, being sure to always give them at least 3 boxes of wear for their armor, and 2-injury harm for their weapons. If a full squad of eight soldiers works as part of a coordinated attack, treat them as a small mob with the tracks below:

EXHAUSTION □□□□ **WEAR** □□□□
INJURY □□□□ **MORALE** □□

HARM INFLICTED: 3-injury

DRIVE: *To quell the rebellion*

EQUIPMENT:

- Standard Marquisate arms and armor

Woodland Alliance Rebels

The local rebel forces are a mix of trained Woodland Alliance soldiers and new local Alliance volunteers. The volunteers are fighting for their home so they are substantially more loyal to the local cause than a traditional soldier. That commitment helps balance out their relative inexperience. Their skills in navigating and piloting the waters of Grand Lake are unmatched in the conflict. Approximately 50 denizens are active as part of the fighting force. If needed, you can create specific soldiers: use the GM's NPC creation rules, being sure to always give them at least 2 boxes of wear for their patchwork armor, and 2-injury harm for their weapons. If a full squad of eight Alliance rebels works as part of a coordinated attack, treat them as a small mob with the tracks below:

EXHAUSTION □□□ **WEAR** □□□
INJURY □□□ **MORALE** □□□□

HARM INFLICTED: 2-injury

DRIVE: *To free Bertram's Cove from Marquisate rule*

EQUIPMENT:

- Scavenged armor
- Makeshift, deadly weapons



Important Places

Marquisate Fort

Thick, heavily-guarded wooden fortifications surround the fort's exterior. One large central gate provides access to the base's interior courtyard. The inner area is dotted with small wooden buildings, training areas, and a small central command structure. A large rectangular barracks building hugs one of the outside walls. Catwalks line the tops of the walls where security patrols march their length throughout the day and night. Nighttime gate access is restricted to those that know the day's password.

Secret Alliance Base

Hidden among jagged rocks and old-growth trees, the rebel base is invisible from the waters of Grand Lake. The area's terrain takes the place of more traditional fortified walls but is incredibly secure. A short granite canyon leads from the beach into the base itself. A camouflaged harbor located further down the shore houses the majority of the Alliance's impromptu fleet when not on missions. Fishing vessels crewed by local Alliance sympathizers patrol the area, always alert and ready to support the base if needed.

Wreck of the Wavebreaker

Few denizens ever truly understand the crushing pressure of deep water and fewer still lives to tell about it. The *Wavebreaker* sits on its side at the bottom of Grand Lake. There is a gaping hole in the lower section of the hull and debris litters the surrounding area. The classified documents are in the captain's quarters towards the aft section of the ship. Light is sparse during the day, the barest hints of sunlight filtering down through the lake waters. At night nothing is visible at the wreck site unless the area can be lit artificially.

Daisy's Workshop

The interior of the windowless shed near the pier that houses Daisy's workshop is a maelstrom of half-finished projects, stacks of materials, and piles of books. The two exceptions to that chaos are the workbench lining one wall and the tool rack lining another. Each is immaculately clean and lovingly organized. It is clear the pride Daisy has in her workspace. An oil lamp hangs on a chain near the workbench to provide light. Security in the shed consists of a simple metal padlock on the door.

Special Rules

Deepwater Recovery

When you seek treasure in the depths, tell the GM what you're looking for and where you're looking, then ask the following questions. For each yes, add a +1 to your total.

- Are you a good swimmer?
- Is the water shallow?
- Are you free of threats from anything nearby?

On a 10+, you find what you're looking for. On a 7–9, you find something else useful or important, instead. On a miss, you're snared and hindered before needing to struggle back to the surface; mark exhaustion equal to the difference of 9 and your roll—if you rolled a total of 3, you would mark 4-exhaustion. If you can't mark enough exhaustion on a miss, you drown.

Swinging Ship to Ship

When you use daring acrobatics to move from ship to ship, tell the GM where you're going and roll with Finesse. On a hit, you make it to where you're going and mark exhaustion. On a 10+, you gain the upper hand, spot a weakness, or expose a flaw, your choice. On a 7–9, you find yourself in a tight spot. On a miss, you land exactly where you didn't want to be.

Where to Begin

As the vagabonds arrive in Bertram's Cove, they are greeted by Daisy Delaware, an excellent source of information. With Astrid Montague on the dock, players can easily engage with the Marquisate leader and get her perspective on the problem. Captain Sparrowhawk presents the town. Most villagers have a positive view of Sparrowhawk and can direct vagabonds to Saffron Goodacre as a town leader who can answer questions.

Daisy Delaware isn't aligned with either side in the war. If asked, her main concerns are finding the missing gold and collecting any information the vagabonds share. Daisy makes a good source of information when the vagabonds don't want to approach either side but are still discovering what is happening in Bertram's Cove. She can facilitate introductions with either the Alliance or the Marquisate leaders.

As things continue, make an escalation—a move designed to intensify the situation and draw the PCs in further. Escalations can provide new opportunities, create new dangers, or close down outlets for escape. If things get too quiet or slow, or the vagabonds aren't sure what to do, make an escalation. Here are some examples:

- Down a quiet moonlit street, a young mouse, Aiden Birch, pushes a wheelbarrow with one hand and uses his elbow to guide the other handle. A torch sputters in his free hand, providing enough light to navigate the roadway. The front

PC BONDS TO BERTRAM'S COVE

Each prebuilt PC in this booklet has some bonds tying them to Bertram's Cove and its NPCs. These bonds are described in the backgrounds on the character sheets, as well as here for the GM to reference:

- **Dara the Adventurer:** She was raised across Grand Lake from Bertram's Cove in Oar's Rest. Saffron Goodacre inspired her to become an adventurer. She was also childhood best friends with Aiden's sister Rose.
- **Sherwin the Harrier:** Sherwin was born in Bertram's Cove and still has family there. His brother Hookpaw is a high-ranking local Alliance soldier.
- **Clip the Ronin:** Clip's mentor, Maître Espion Dubois, is currently stationed as spymaster in Bertram's Cove. Clip owes him for his freedom.
- **Umberto the Raider:** Umberto wants to test himself in battle against Captain Sparrowhawk.
- **Rattler the Pirate:** Bertram's Cove is her childhood home. She hates the Marquisate occupation and hates Sparrowhawk even more for becoming the scourge of Grand Lake before she could.
- **Lucasta the Raconteur:** She is excited to return home and captivate the entire town without ever having her true identity discovered. She looks forward to impressing Declan, who she is sure won't recognize her.

wheel hits a small rock and topples over. An unmarked barrel crashes to the ground, cracking and rolling across the street. An acrid odor rises from the fluid spilling out of the barrel—something dangerous, something flammable.

- The night air is suddenly filled with shouting and screams. Soldiers, under the order of Maître Dubois, are dragging suspected Alliance sympathizers from their homes out into the streets, demanding the location of the local Woodland Alliance base. Denizens cry and shout for help but their unarmed neighbors are in no position to stand against the guards.
- A Marquisate supply ship filled with medical supplies suddenly erupts in flames as it pushes away from the town dock. An alarm goes up and sailors start jumping from the flaming ship. A gust of wind catches the sails. With no one at the ship's wheel, it starts drifting towards the town's moored fishing fleet as the inferno grows.
- The docks erupt into chaos as Marquisate troops shout that Captain Sparrowhawk has been sighted near the fort. There is a flash of red fabric—a jaunty hat matching the one worn by Sparrowhawk—seen disappearing down an alley.

Each playbook has built-in ties to the town and things they want to accomplish. You can use these to further push escalations towards confrontation. Recognizing someone from their past in a dangerous situation or suddenly being presented with a path forward towards a personal goal, regardless of the danger involved, increases the potential for the vagabonds jumping forward into explosive situations.

Because the entire area is contested space, there is little that the vagabonds can engage with that doesn't have consequences. Build on the choices they make to move towards an exciting and engaging story for everyone. For example, if the vagabonds focus on recovering the *Wavebreaker's* gold, they still need to leave the area, which is surrounded by dozens of search vessels that will board and search any suspicious boats. Who did they speak to in Bertram's Cove that might now be under suspicion of aiding the theft? Continue to build the pressure until their only way forward is through dangerous and spectacular actions worthy of the stories and songs created for legends.

Playbooks

Below is a list of all the pregenerated characters included in this quickstart. In the following pages, you'll find the playbooks themselves, each designed to be printed doubled-sided on single sheets of 8.5" x 11" paper. There are six vagabonds in this booklet.

- **Dara the Adventurer:** is a reasonable and outgoing adventurer in search of whatever excitement the day might bring. All the better if it's shared with friends.
- **Sherwin the Harrier:** Sherwin is a roguish vagabond who loves to win. Races, battles, or pie-eating contests are all the same to him. Winning is what counts.
- **Clip the Ronin:** Clip is a former spy of a non-Woodland power. He walked away from that place and now serves no master but himself, walking those paths that make him feel most alive.
- **Umberto the Raider:** Umberto is a former bandit whose body carries the scars gained from a lifetime of fighting. Sometimes you have to take what you need the hard way.
- **Rattler the Pirate:** Rattler is the embodiment of the pirate's code: sail free, take what you want, and never leave your crew behind.
- **Lucasta the Raconteur:** Lucasta is a magnificent storyteller. Her tenuous relationship with the truth gets her in as much trouble as it saves her.

Dara the Adventurer

A kindhearted owl who moves through the world in search of wrongs to right and friends to make. She believes that there is power in standing unified against the tyranny that evil visits upon the innocent.



Charm +2 • Cunning +2 • Finesse +0 • Luck +0 • Might -1

Your Nature

Extrovert: Clear your exhaustion track when you share a moment of real warmth, friendship, or enjoyment with someone.

Your Drives

Ambition: Advance when you increase your reputation with any faction.

Justice: Advance when you achieve justice for someone wronged by a powerful, wealthy, or high-status individual.

Roguish Feats: Counterfeit, Sleight of Hand

Weapon Skills: Parry

Your Moves

Well-Read: Take +1 Cunning (max +3).

Subduing Strikes: When you aim to subdue an enemy quickly and nonlethally, you can **engage in melee** with Cunning instead of Might. You cannot choose to inflict serious harm if you do.

Galen on the Pulse: When you gather information about the goings-on in a clearing, roll with Cunning. On a 10+, ask 3. On a 7-9, ask 2.

- Who holds power in this clearing?
- Who is the local dissident?
- What are the denizens afraid of?
- What do the denizens hope for?
- What opportunities exist for enterprising vagabonds?

On a miss, your questions tip off someone dangerous.

YOUR CONNECTIONS

Friend

I traveled with _____ for a time right after I became a vagabond. They helped keep me safe and showed me the Woodland. What keepsake did I gift them?

- When you **help** them, you can mark 2-exhaustion to give a +2, instead of 1-exhaustion for a +1.

Partner

_____ and I fought alongside each other to defend a clearing from a faction's advances... but we failed. Why did we defend the clearing? Why did we fail? Who defeated us?

- When you **fill in this connection**, you each mark 2-prestige with the faction you helped, and mark 2-notoriety with the faction you harmed. During play, if you are spotted together, then any prestige or notoriety gains with those factions are doubled for the two of you.

Background

Growing up in Oar's Rest, across the Grand Lake from Bertram's Cove, Dara had a desire to travel the world. She spent her free time on the docks with her best friend Rose Birch and welcomed visitors from across the lake and listened to their stories. One frequent visitor that always spent time with Dara was Saffron Goodacre from Bertram's Cove. Saffron seemed so wise and always had the best stories of adventuring heroes toppling tyrants and the valiant sacrifices required by those who want to change the world. Promising to return home one day, Dara set out for a life of adventure. She is now on the precipice of keeping that promise as she sails into Bertram's Cove as a crewmember of the *Twice Sunk*. She is eager to see old friends and share tales of her own daring exploits.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ INJURY
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ EXHAUSTION
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ DEPLETION

Your Equipment

CARRYING: 2 BURDENED: 3 MAXIMUM CARRY: 6

Quarterstaff ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

- **Range:** Close | **Weapon skill tags:** Parry
- **Reach:** When you **engage in melee**, mark wear on this weapon to inflict harm instead of trading harm; you cannot use this tag if your enemy's weapon also has reach.
- **Blunted:** This weapon inflicts exhaustion, not injury.

Robes ☐ ☐

- **Unassuming:** Until you harm an enemy, they will never deem you more of a threat than other vagabonds with arms and armor.

YOUR REPUTATION

Denizens -3 ☐ ☐ ☐ -2 ☐ ☐ ☐ -1 ☐ ☐ ☒ +0 ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ +1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +3

Marquisate -3 ☐ ☐ ☐ -2 ☐ ☐ ☐ -1 ☐ ☐ ☒ +0 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +3

Woodland Alliance -3 ☐ ☐ ☐ -2 ☐ ☐ ☐ -1 ☐ ☐ ☒ +0 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ +3

NOTORIETY PRESTIGE

Sherwin the Harrier

Always in motion, Sherwin is constantly drawn to the next shiny adventure or challenge. From his point of view, friends are nice but the true measure of a vagabond is the list of enemies they make.



Charm 0 • Cunning -1 • Finesse +3 • Luck +2 • Might 0

Your Nature

Competitive: Clear your exhaustion track when you take dramatically unnecessary risks to show off.

Your Drives

Infamy: Advance when you decrease your Reputation with any faction.

Traveler: Advance when you replace a valuable or meaningful item with one that represents the local culture.

Roguish Feats: Acrobatics, Sneak

Weapon Skills: Trick Shot

Your Moves

Fleet of Foot and Hand: Take +1 Finesse (max +3).

Parkour: When you dash your way through a chaotic scene or fight, roll with Finesse. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 2. Spend your hold 1-for-1 to dash to something within sight and reach without being stopped, or to dash away from something nearby without being stopped. You can dash away from an enemy even at the moment they attack. On a miss, your surroundings trip you up, and you're caught in place while danger closes in.

Smuggler's Path: You've got a good sense for finding secret paths and doors. When you spend time looking for a secret way in or out of a place that might have one, mark exhaustion and roll with Luck. On a hit, you find a hidden path—the GM will detail it and to where it leads. On a 10+, there's something along or inside the path of value to you—the GM will tell you what. On a miss, you find a secret path...and someone else is using it right this second. They probably won't be happy you found their secret.

YOUR CONNECTIONS

Friend

_____ and I forged a bond while investigating a ruin deep in the woods. What strange minor trinkets do each of us carry from that expedition?

When you **help** them, you can mark 2-exhaustion to give a +2, instead of 1-exhaustion for a +1.

Professional

_____ and I tried to blaze a new trail between two clearings; without the support of the major factions, it never fully came to fruition.

If you share information with them after **reading a tense situation**, you both benefit from the +1 for acting on the answers. If you **help** them while they **attempt a roguish feat**, you gain choices on the help move as if you had marked 2-exhaustion when you mark 1-exhaustion.

Background

Sherwin appreciates one thing in life above everything else: winning. Growing up in Bertram's Cove as the youngest of nine siblings, he learned that he had to be quick, smart, and cunning. He learned that if you get others mad they don't notice who ate the last bread roll. He is an excitable squirrel constantly fidgeting with whatever is in his paws. This need for movement and action keeps him always wanting to move forward. When he found out that his friend Rattler was leaving town to find her way and become a famous pirate captain, he invited himself on the journey and the two have been together since. While most of his family has scattered around the Woodland in the years since, his oldest brother Bill "Hookpaw" Hayward has stayed and is working with the rebels. Sherwin hates his brother and hopes to finally put him in his place when Hookpaw sees how well Sherwin has done for himself.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ INJURY
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ EXHAUSTION
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ DEPLETION

Your Equipment

CARRYING: 2 BURDENED: 4 MAXIMUM CARRY: 8

Rabbitfolk Axe ☐☐☐

- Range:** Far, Close | **Weapon skill tags:** Disarm, Trick Shot
- Rabbitfolk Steel:** Mark wear to **engage in melee** with Finesse instead of Might
- Throwable:** Mark exhaustion to **target a vulnerable foe** with this weapon at far range.

Leather Armor ☐

- Flexible:** When you grapple with someone, mark exhaustion to ignore the first choice they make.

YOUR REPUTATION

Denizens	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+0	☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Marquise	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	+0	☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Woodland Alliance	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☒ ☒ ☐	+0	☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

NOTORIETY

PRESTIGE

Clip the Ronin

A raccoon dog who understands both the power of a winning smile and an icy glare. Clip has the experience to know which is the most effective. He spent too many years obediently following orders. Now he uses his skills to live life on his own terms.



Charm +0 • Cunning +3 • Finesse +0 • Luck -1 • Might +2

Your Nature

Survivor: Clear your exhaustion track when you try to flee or cover allies' flight from a dangerous or overwhelming situation.

Your Drives

Thrills: Advance when you escape from certain death or incarceration.

Principles: Advance when you express or embody your moral principles at great cost to yourself or your allies.

Roguish Feats: Sneak

Weapon Skills: Cleave

Your Moves

Knowing a Lord's Will: When you **figure out** a denizen of status, authority, or power, roll with Might instead of Charm. When you **trick** a denizen of status, authority, or power by playing subordinate, roll with Might instead of Cunning.

Well-Mannered: When you enter a social environment dependent on manners and etiquette, roll with Cunning. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 2. Lose all hold when you leave or when social rules fall apart. Spend hold 1-for-1 to:

- Cover up a social faux pas on behalf of yourself or an ally; clear 1-exhaustion
- Call out someone else's social faux pas; inflict 1-morale harm on them
- Charm someone; take +1 ongoing to speak to them while you have hold
- Demonstrate your value; mark prestige with a powerful denizen's faction

On a miss, the rules of etiquette here are far different from what you expected; mark exhaustion as you commit a gravely impolite error.

Always Watching: Take +1 Cunning (max +3).

YOUR CONNECTIONS

Watcher

I see in _____ many reminders of my old master. I am drawn to them, even as I watch them carefully. What is it that reminds me of my old master? How do they feel about my watchful eyes?

When you **figure them out**, you always hold 1, even on a miss. When you **plead with them to go along with you**, you can let them clear 2-exhaustion instead of 1.

Partner

_____ and I worked together on my first real task of significance in the Woodland, deposing a dangerous authority figure of a faction. Who did we depose? Why?

When you fill in this connection, you each mark 2-prestige with the faction you helped, and mark 2-notoriety with the faction you harmed. During play, if you are spotted together, then any prestige or notoriety gains with those factions are doubled for the two of you.

Background

A former soldier and spy, Clip spent his adult life with others telling him what to do. He won't ever let anyone control him again. During his tenure in his far-off homeland, Clip was trained by a foreign expert—Maître Espion Dubois himself, visiting Clip's homeland as a diplomatic endeavor from Le Monde de Cat. Under the tutelage of Maître Espion Dubois, he learned the ways of high society, advanced surveillance techniques, and how to leverage both against a target. When Clip received word his master had been killed—and that assassins would be coming for Clip as well—Dubois helped him escape with the quiet understanding that there was a debt to pay. While Clip has no real loyalty to Dubois, he respects the old cat and understands that burning bridges can leave you alone and trapped on an island.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ INJURY
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ EXHAUSTION
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ DEPLETION

Your Equipment

CARRYING: 3 BURDENED: 6 MAXIMUM CARRY: 12

Mastercrafted Sword ☐☐☐

- **Range:** Close | **Weapon skill tags:** Cleave, Storm a Group, Vicious Strike
- **Sharp:** Mark wear when inflicting harm with this weapon to inflict 1 additional harm.
- **Large:** Mark exhaustion when inflicting harm with this weapon to inflict 1 additional harm.

Chainmail ☐☐☐

- **Tightly Woven:** When you take a few seconds to repair this armor after a fight, clear 1-wear you marked during the fight.
- **Weighty:** This item counts as 1 additional Load.

YOUR REPUTATION

Denizens	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☐ ☒	+0	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Marquise	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☐ ☐	+0	☒ ☒ ☒ ☒	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Woodland Alliance	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☒ ☒	+0	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

NOTORIETY

PRESTIGE

Umberto the Raider

A sturdy mouse with thickly muscled shoulders, a sharp axe, and a keen eye for opportunity. Umberto finds beauty in the chaos of battle, the family forged of spilled blood, and the clink of coins in his pouch.



Charm +0 • Cunning -1 • Finesse +2 • Luck +0 • Might +2

Your Nature

Bandit: Clear your exhaustion track when you try to use the threat of force to secure valuables from formidable opposition.

Your Drives

Loyalty: You're loyal to someone; name them. Advance when you obey their order at a great cost to yourself.

Chaos: Advance when you topple a tyrannical or dangerously overbearing figure or order.

Roguish Feats: Acrobatics, Blindside

Weapon Skills: Storm a Group

Your Moves

Eye For Battle: When you *read a tense situation* just as violence breaks out, roll with Might instead of Cunning.

Ironhide: When a group inflicts harm on you, suffer 2 fewer harm from each attack (minimum 1-harm); when you inflict harm on a group, inflict 1 additional harm.

Plan of Attack: When you work out a plan of attack with someone, roll with Might. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 2. You can spend your hold 1-for-1, regardless of distance, while the plan is being carried out to:

- Lend a hand; add +1 to someone's roll (choose after rolling)
- Soften a blow; reduce by one the harm someone suffers from a single attack
- Ensure your gear holds; allow someone to ignore marking depletion or wear

On a miss, hold 1, but your plan encounters some disastrous opposition right from the start.

YOUR CONNECTIONS

Watcher

_____ bested me in combat when I got out of hand. How? Why did I thank them for it?

When you **figure them out**, you always hold 1, even on a miss. When you **plead with them to go along with you**, you can let them clear 2-exhaustion instead of 1.

Protector

The first time I saw _____ they piqued my curiosity; I went out of my way to protect them from the ire of my own band. What about them sparked my loyalty?

When they are in reach, mark exhaustion to take a blow meant for them. If you do, take +1 ongoing to weapon moves for the rest of the scene.

Background

Umberto is a mouse who loves to fight. That was true growing up on a farm with his parents. It remained true after their death when he left the farm to travel with a group of marauding bandits. It's not anger or a desire to hurt others that drives his appreciation of violence. It is the simple certainty that the action brings with it. A clear sense of purpose, attack until you either win or lose. Umberto has heard many stories about the local rebel pirate Captain Sparrowhawk and has sought more wherever he goes. Either Sparrowhawk is a man worth following into battle or a dangerous tyrant on the verge of destroying the future of Bertram's Cove. Either way, Umberto wants to meet Sparrowhawk on the field of battle. Ally or enemy matters not.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ INJURY
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ EXHAUSTION
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ DEPLETION

Your Equipment

CARRYING: 3 BURDENED: 6 MAXIMUM CARRY: 12

Battle Axe ☐

- **Range:** Close | **Weapon skill tags:** Storm a Group, Cleave
- **Large:** Mark exhaustion when inflicting harm with this weapon to inflict 1 additional harm.

Plate Armor ☐

- **Cumbersome:** Mark 1-exhaustion when you don your armor—clear 1-exhaustion when you take it off.
- **Weighty:** This item counts as 1 additional Load.

Large Shield ☐

- **Metal Boss:** When you *engage in melee* with an opponent, mark wear to inflict exhaustion in addition to all other harm.

YOUR REPUTATION

Denizens -3 ☐☐☐☐ -2 ☐☐☐☐ -1 ☐☐☒ +0 ☒☒☐☐☐ +1 ☐☐☐☐☐ +2 ☐☐☐☐☐ +3

Marquisate -3 ☐☐☐☐ -2 ☐☐☐☐ -1 ☐☐☐ +0 ☐☐☐☐☐ +1 ☐☐☐☐☐ +2 ☐☐☐☐☐ +3

Woodland Alliance -3 ☐☐☐☐ -2 ☐☐☐☐ -1 ☐☒☒ +0 ☒☒☐☐☐ +1 ☐☐☐☐☐ +2 ☐☐☐☐☐ +3

NOTORIETY PRESTIGE

Rattler the Pirate

A wiry mouse who moves across the deck of a ship with an ease few will ever master. Rattler is only truly at home on the water. She is always looking for a way to help free the undeserving from the burden of their wealth.



Charm -1 • Cunning +2 • Finesse +1 • Luck +0 • Might +1

Your Nature

Rogue: Clear your exhaustion track when you attempt to double-cross, triple-cross, or betray a powerful or dangerous NPC

Your Drives

Freedom: Advance when you free a group of denizens from oppression.

Crime: Advance when you illicitly score a significant prize or pull off an illegal caper against impressive odds.

Roguish Feats: Acrobatics, Blindside, Pick Lock

Weapon Skills: Disarm

Your Moves

Small Ship: By default, your ship has a wear track with four boxes. Mark wear when it suffers serious damage or when a move calls for it. When your ship's wear track is filled, it is dead in the water and must be repaired at port. If you must mark wear on your ship but its whole track is full, your ship is lost. If you ever lose the ship the GM may present you with an opportunity to get a new one.

Your Ship's Name: Twice Sunk

Wear ☐☐☐☐

Blessings:

- **Nimble:** take +1 ongoing to tricking NPCs when relying on your ship's speed
- **Swift:** once per session, mark wear to outrun any pursuer on the water

Flaws:

- **Dreaded:** take -1 to Reputation with a chosen faction while on your ship
- **Rickety:** your ship has one fewer box of wear than usual (3 instead of 4)

Sail On: When you travel from clearing to clearing by ship, mark wear on the ship and roll with Luck. On a hit, you reach the next port; the GM will tell you one (mostly) friendly denizen you know there. On a 7-9, they are holding a grudge—work it out or offer at least 2-Value to let things go. On a miss, you are caught in a dangerous situation along your route before you arrive at port.

Swashbuckler: When you first charge into battle by swinging, diving, or leaping to *engage an enemy in melee at close range*, roll with Luck instead of Might.

YOUR CONNECTIONS

Family

_____ had a good relationship with my former captain. How have they supported me in taking on the role as my own?

- When you **help** them, you can mark 2-exhaustion to give a +2, instead of 1-exhaustion for a +1.

Partner

_____ and I seized valuable cargo from a faction together. Who did we rob? Why?

- When you fill in this connection, you each mark 2-prestige with the faction you helped, and mark 2-notoriety with the faction you harmed. During play, if you are spotted together, then any prestige or notoriety gains with those factions are doubled for the two of you.

Background

Rattler grew up in Bertram's Cove with her father Archer, a local fisherman. She learned to walk on the deck of his boat and grew up spending as much time on the water as he allowed. His insistence was the only reason she attended school. That's where she was the day a massive storm swept across Grand Lake, killing her father. While most of the community came together to care for Rattler, the former leader of the Marquisate fort, Pierre Toussaint, seized her father's boat for non-payment of taxes. Swearing to return with a ship of her own, she walked out of Bertram's Cove and has not returned until today. Hearing that Captain Sparrowhawk has filled the role she feels she was destined for has left her bitter and looking for a fight. Sailing home on a ship of her own, the *Twice Sunk*, seems one step closer to realizing her destiny.

☐☐☐☐ INJURY
☐☐☐☐ EXHAUSTION
☐☐☐☐ DEPLETION

Your Equipment

CARRYING: 2 BURDENED: 4
MAXIMUM CARRY: 8

Dueling Rapier ☐☐☐

- **Range:** Close | **Weapon skill tags:** Disarm, Parry
- **Precise:** Mark wear to ignore your enemy's armor when you inflict harm.
- **Quick:** Mark exhaustion to engage in melee with Finesse instead of Might.

Scavenged Armor ☐☐☐

- **Makeshift:** This item cannot be repaired. This negative tag refunds 2-Value instead of 1-Value.

YOUR REPUTATION

Denizens	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+0	☒ ☒ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Marquisate	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☒ ☒ ☐ ☐	+0	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Woodland Alliance	-3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	-1	☐ ☐ ☒ ☐	+0	☒ ☒ ☐ ☐	+1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	+3	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

NOTORIETY

PRESTIGE

Lucasta the Raconteur

A stunning weasel with a captivating voice who can hold the attention of even the most unruly crowd. She hopes to be a storytelling legend so the memory of her lives beyond her days.



Charm +3 • Cunning +2 • Finesse +1 • Luck -1 • Might -1

Your Nature

Legend: Clear your exhaustion track when you put on a performance in front of a large, attentive audience.

Your Drives

Clean Paws: Advance when you accomplish an illicit, criminal goal while maintaining a believable veneer of innocence.

Thrills: Advance when you escape from certain death or incarceration.

Roguish Feats: Counterfeit, Pick Lock, Pick Pocket

Weapon Skills: Vicious Strike

Your Moves

Tools of the Trade: You have a valued (at least to you) symbol of your skill and talent; it starts with 3 boxes of wear and its value is essentially priceless to you.

Wear □□□□ | **Type:** flute | **Look:** tarnished

- **Sturdy:** +2 boxes of wear; when you tend to your symbol after a public performance, clear a box of wear.
- **Enchanting:** mark wear instead of exhaustion to add +2 when you **help** another vagabond by distracting someone with your performance
- **Revealing:** when you perform in public, mark wear to ask any one character who watched "what truly motivates your character?"; take +1 when acting on the answer

When you first put on an earnest, public performance in a clearing, roll with Charm. On a hit, name a faction you flatter; an important member comes forward to offer you work. On a 10+, mark prestige with their faction as well. On a miss, you draw the worst kind of attention to you and your friends.

All Eyes on Me: When you create a distraction through outlandish performance, mark exhaustion and roll with Charm. On a hit, the room can't look away; your allies take +1 ongoing to Sneak, Hide, Pickpocket, or **trust fate** while you perform. On a 10+, hold 1; spend the hold to grant an ally a +3 for one of the aforementioned rolls instead. On a miss, your audience finds something about your performance insulting or misguided; they fall over themselves to give you their opinion.

Sweet as Honey: Take +1 Charm (max +3).

YOUR CONNECTIONS

Family

_____ and I have been through battles, ruin-delves, heists, and more together. Which particular incident made us close? How did I make it famous?

... When you help them fulfill their nature, you both clear your exhaustion track.

Friend

_____ and I still talk about the time we were run out of a clearing, even though we thought our adventures would lead the powers-that-be to treat us as heroes. What did we do? How did it go wrong?

... When you help them, you can mark 2-exhaustion to give a +2, instead of 1-exhaustion for a +1.

Background

Lucasta was born Jayne Wheatly in the town of Bertram's Cove. She was a quiet and isolated child without friends or family beyond her parents. No one acknowledged her except for one boy, Declan Sheehan, who smiled and said good morning every day. She retreated into her books and stories. She created the persona of Lucasta LaGrange, a traveling storyteller, singer, and actor. No one noticed when her family moved away in her teen years and she seized the chance to reinvent herself. She has truly become Lucasta in every way and is proud of her time as a crew member of the *Twice Sunk*. She has seen more of the Woodland than she had thought possible and has grown to be the amazing storyteller of her childhood dreams. No one in Bertram's Cove will ever forget the name Lucasta LaGrange!

□□□□ INJURY
□□□□ EXHAUSTION
□□□□ DEPLETION

Your Equipment

CARRYING: 2 BURDENED: 3
MAXIMUM CARRY: 6

Foxfolk Dagger □□

- **Range:** Intimate, Close | **Weapon skill tags:** Vicious Strike, Disarm
- **Quick:** Mark exhaustion to **engage in melee** with Finesse instead of Might.
- **Foxfolk Steel:** Ignore the first box of wear you mark on this item each session.

Scavenged Armor □□□

- **Reinforced:** While wearing this armor, you may absorb injury as exhaustion 1-for-1 instead of absorbing it as wear.

YOUR REPUTATION

Denizens	-3	□□□□	-2	□□□□	-1	□□	☒	+0	☒	□□□□□	+1	□□□□□	+2	□□□□□	+3
Marquise	-3	□□□□	-2	□□□□	-1	□□	☒	+0	□□□□□	+1	□□□□□	+2	□□□□□	+3	
Woodland Alliance	-3	□□□□	-2	□□□□	-1	□□	☒	+0	☒☒☒	□□	+1	□□□□□	+2	□□□□□	+3

NOTORIETY
PRESTIGE

Advancements

Vagabonds advance by following their drives. Each drive lists a condition by which the vagabond can advance. Ultimately, the GM is the judge of whether or not the vagabond has met their drive condition, but players should call to the GM's attention when they think they have met a drive condition.

When you advance by following a drive, choose one option from your character's list.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You cannot take more than one advance per drive per session. So even if you think you've hit the same drive multiple times in a single session, you only get to advance once. You can advance once per session for each of your drives, however, meaning you can advance twice per session at most.

Adventurer

- ☐ Add +1 to a stat of your choice (to a maximum score of +2).
- ☐ Take this move:

Orator: When you give a speech to interested denizens of a clearing, say what you are motivating them to do and roll with Charm. On a hit, they will move to do it as they see fit. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- They don't try to take your intent too far
- They don't disband at the first sign of real resistance
- They don't demand you stand at their head and lead

On a miss, they twist your message in unpredictable ways.

- ☐ Take this move:
Fast Friends: When you try to befriend an NPC you've just met by matching their personality, body language, and desires, mark exhaustion and roll with Cunning. On a hit, they'll look upon you favorably—ask them any one noncompromising question and they'll answer truthfully, or request a simple favor and they'll do it for you. On a 10+, they really like you—they'll share a valuable secret or grant you a serious favor instead. On a miss, you read them totally wrong, and their displeasure costs you.
- ☐ Take roguish feats **SNEAK** and **HIDE**.
- ☐ Take the weapon skills **CONFUSE SENSES** and **IMPROVISE WEAPON**.

Harrier

- ☐ Add +1 to a stat of your choice (to a maximum score of +2).
- ☐ Take this move:

Cross Country: Take one extra box of exhaustion. When your exhaustion track is full and you must mark exhaustion, you may choose to mark an equivalent amount of injury instead of being removed from the situation or going unconscious.

- ☐ Take this move:
Don't Shoot the Messenger: Take the **COUNTERFEIT** roguish feat (it does not count against your limit). When you pretend to be an innocuous messenger carrying a missive of import to trick someone, roll with Luck instead of Cunning.
- ☐ Take roguish feats **HIDE** and **SLEIGHT OF HAND**.
- ☐ Take the weapon skills **HARRY A GROUP** and **QUICK SHOT**.

Ronin

- ☐ Add +1 to a stat of your choice (to a maximum score of +2).
- ☐ Take this move:

Always Armed: Take the weapon skill **IMPROVISE A WEAPON** (it does not count against your limit). When you deal harm with an improvised weapon, deal +1 harm.

- ☐ Take this move:
The Rules of War: When you call upon a reasonable foe to uphold a rule of war, roll with Might. On a hit, they feel obliged; choose one below they must follow. On a 7-9, they choose one that you must follow; disobey, and the obligation ends.
 - Show mercy to surrendering foes and prisoners
 - Refrain from underhanded tactics in a fight
 - Face each other without aid, back-up, or assistance
 - Keep the violence away from the unarmed or innocent
 - Fight to surrender or subdual, without retreatOn a miss, they feel no obligation to your ideas of war; prepare for a brutal lesson in the rules they adhere to.
- ☐ Take roguish feats **COUNTERFEIT** and **BLINDSIDE**.
- ☐ Take the weapon skills **STORM A GROUP** and **VIOIOUS STRIKE**.

Raider

- ☐ Add +1 to a stat of your choice (to a maximum score of +2).
- ☐ Take this move:
Merciful Dight: When you try to befriend an NPC you've saved from the wrath of another, spend time helping them further (mark exhaustion) or buy them a drink (mark depletion). Your continued kindness pays dividends; they'll share a valuable secret or grant you a serious favor.
- ☐ Take this move:
Loot and Plunder: When you loot a rich area for valuables, roll with Finesse. On a hit, something out of the ordinary catches your eye; claim it and it's yours. On a 10+ all 3. on a 7-9 choose 1:
 - It is worth a lot of money (+2-value)
 - It is of special value to a particular faction (+4 prestige if traded to them)
 - It is extremely durable (+1-wear)On a miss, you can get your hands on it, but it is sought by dangerous denizens who are all too willing to kill to take it from whoever possesses it.
- ☐ Take roguish feats **HIDE** and **PICK POCKET**.
- ☐ Take the weapon skills **CLEAVE** and **CONFUSE SENSES**.

Pirate

- ☐ Add +1 to a stat of your choice (to a maximum score of +2).
- ☐ Take this move:
Plenty of Rum: Once per session, you may *plead* with a vagabond a second time in a session by sharing your rum (mark depletion) with the target of your pleading.
- ☐ Take this move:
Sea Legs: When you attempt a roguish feat aboard a ship to **BLINDSIDE**, **SNEAK**, **HIDE**, or **PERFORM ACROBATICS**, roll with Luck instead of Finesse.
- ☐ Take roguish feats **SNEAK** and **HIDE**.
- ☐ Take the weapon skills **IMPROVISE WEAPON** and **PARRY**.

Raconteur

- ☐ Add +1 to a stat of your choice (to a maximum score of +2).
- ☐ Take this move:
Quick Fingers, Quicker Eyes: When you *read a tense situation* while performing, you may always ask one question, even on a miss.
- ☐ Take this move:
Silver Tongue: When you *persuade* an NPC with a colorful anecdote, mark exhaustion on a hit to make them reveal something important and relevant about the situation.
- ☐ Take roguish feats **ACROBATICS** and **DISABLE DEVICE**.
- ☐ Take the weapon skills **CONFUSE SENSES** and **DISARM**.





War has returned to the Woodland.

The Marquise de Cat led her armies to victory over many of the clearings, but the Eyrie Dynasties rise again to oppose her. And the mice, rabbits, and foxes of the Woodland do not sit idly by—the Woodland Alliance emerges, a homegrown rebellion to free the Woodland from any oppressors.

In the midst of this war, you and your friends—vagabonds all—travel between the clearings. You take on the jobs that no one else will or can do. You choose whom you serve, if anyone...and you may tip the balance of the war.

ROOT: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME is based on the award-winning **ROOT: A GAME OF WOODLAND MIGHT AND RIGHT** board game by Leder Games. In **ROOT: THE RPG**, you play vagabonds, going on adventures and changing the Woodland with your actions.

This booklet is a sampling of the core rules of **ROOT: THE RPG**, complete with six pregenerated characters and an entire prewritten clearing to give you a strong starting situation for a few sessions of play. Open the book, give it a read, pick some characters, and get playing! All you need is some paper, pencils, and pairs of six-sided dice!

Root: The RPG will be available in retail on January 26, 2022.

Want to learn
more about the
Root RPG?

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